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THE PIONEER BOYS OF
THE OHIO



OR: CLEARING THE WILDERNESS

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THE YOUNG PIONEER SERIES

BY HARRISON ADAMS

Illustrated by Charles Livingston Bull



THE PIONEER BOYS OF THE OHIO,
Or: Clearing the Wilderness . . . \$1.25
THE PIONEER BOYS ON THE GREAT
LAKES, Or: On the Trail of the Iroquois 1.25



L. C. PAGE & COMPANY

53 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.



“ ‘ HERE WE ARE AT THE SPOT I PICKED OUT FOR YOUR SETTLEMENT.’ ” (See page 119.)

St. George Rathbarne

The Young Pioneer Series

THE PIONEER BOYS OF THE OHIO

OR: CLEARING THE WILDERNESS

By HARRISON ADAMS *pseud.*

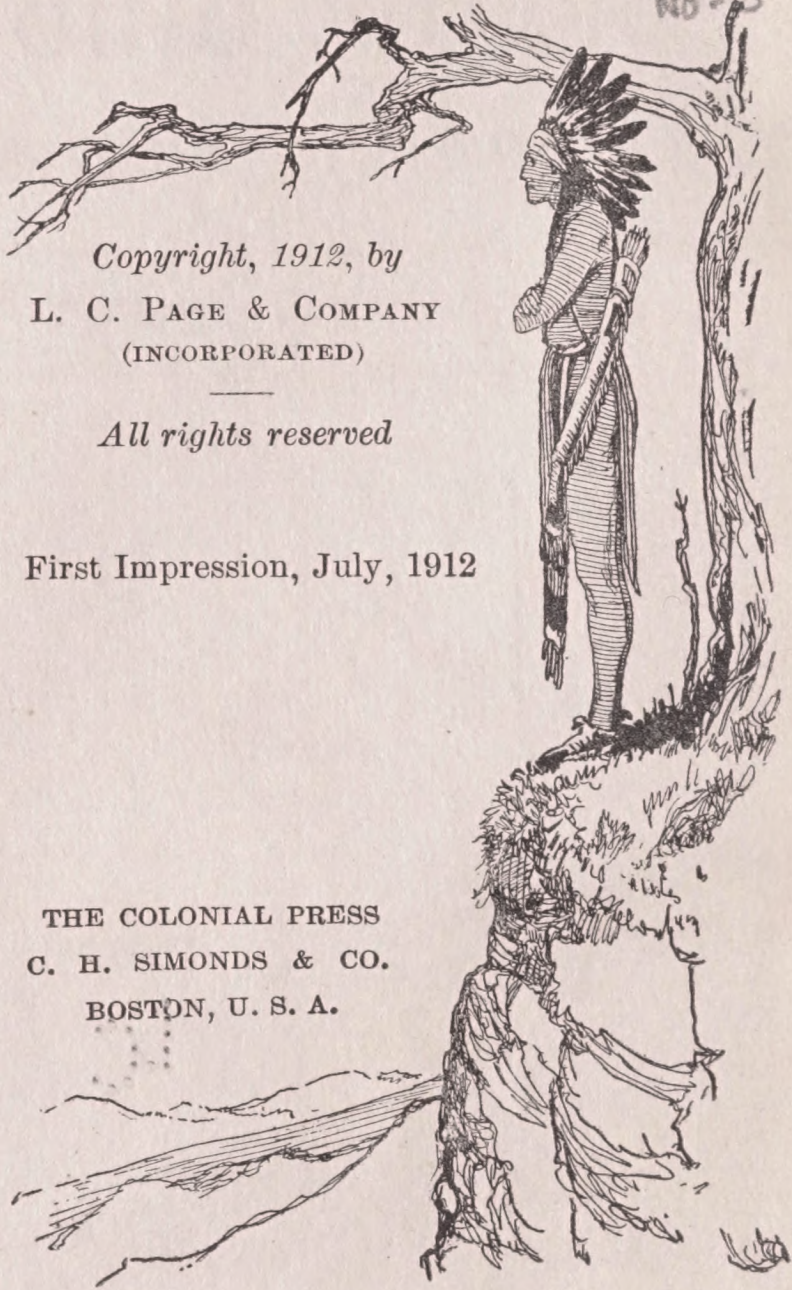
Author of "The Pioneer Boys on the Great Lakes," etc.



Illustrated and Decorated by
CHARLES LIVINGSTON BULL

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First Impression, July, 1912

THE COLONIAL PRESS
C. H. SIMONDS & CO.
BOSTON, U. S. A.

120
© Cl. A319232
12-17660

Recd. M. K. June 13-30.

PREFACE

MY DEAR BOYS:—As doubtless you well know, the early pioneer days were times that tried men's souls. And boys, hardly in their teens, were taught, in the bitter school of experience, that they must always live up to the old Puritan motto, "Trust in the Lord; but *keep your powder dry.*" These same lads early learned to be self-dependent, and to fight their own battles.

Steeped in this atmosphere, the names of many heroic early settlers have come down to us through the pages of history. We all delight to read of their bold achievements, for they were men of whom the country must ever be proud.

But those stirring times before the Revolution also gave birth to many a valiant soul whose daring and sacrifices have never been recorded on the scroll of Fame. Some of these heroes were mere striplings in point of years, yet capable, in times of great stress, of proving themselves "chips of the old block."

It is to record the intensely interesting adventures of several of these young pioneers, whose axes helped to blaze the way of civilization in the then unknown region beyond the Alleghanies, that I have started to write this series of books. I sincerely trust that if you enjoy reading the present and first volume, you will welcome the story to follow, to be called: "The Pioneer Boys on the Great Lakes; or, On the Trail of the Iroquois."

Cordially yours,

HARRISON ADAMS.

May 20th, 1912.





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The Pioneer Boys of the Ohio

CHAPTER I

AFTER FRESH VENISON

“ SHALL we give it up for to-day, Sandy? ”

“ But the afternoon is only half spent, Bob, and we have had such poor luck hunting.”

“ Just so; but it might have been worse. Two hickory-fed squirrels and a plump 'possum make a fair bag after such a hard winter.”

“ Not so very much where there are five mouths to fill. Oh! Bob, if only we *could* get the deer that made these tracks! I'm tired of jerked venison.” (Note 1.) *

Robert Armstrong, sixteen years of age, looked down upon the ground where the trail of the deer was well defined, and evidently he, too, felt some of the eagerness that possessed his more impulsive brother.

* The notes will be found at the end of the book.

It was the days previous to the Revolution. Around the two youths stretched the great primeval Virginia wilderness, sparsely settled, and hedged in by the chain of Alleghany Mountains, beyond which only a few venturesome spirits had ever dared journey; and some of these bold pioneers had never come back to tell the tale of their discoveries and exploits.

The two boys had started from their cabin home, just outside a small Virginia town, determined to secure fresh food for the family, at that time facing unusual privation.

Alexander, or Sandy, as he was always called, the impetuous one, seldom looked any distance ahead, so that it was Robert who many times found himself compelled to pull his younger brother out of serious difficulties.

Still, both lads, having been born and reared on the Virginia frontier, were really older through experience than their years would indicate.

In those strenuous days of pioneering, boys had to learn how to take care of themselves very soon after they began to walk. Their daily life brought them in touch with the perils of the wilderness. They were taught how to handle a gun at five years of age, and the

tracks made by all wild animals soon became as plain to them as the pages of a printed book to a scholar.

Sandy, seeing his more cautious brother hesitate, renewed his pleading.

“ We need this deer very much, Bob,” he went on, eagerly. “ Since father lost his place with old Jason Diggett, things have gone hard with us at home. Mother tries to smile and cheer us up, but every door has been shut against poor father since that tobacco barn burned down, and he was accused of setting fire to it.”

“ Yes,” said the other, a frown crossing his young face as though painful memories had been stirred up by his brother’s words, “ but they were not able to prove anything against father, and we know that he could never have done such a thing.”

“ But the deer,” continued Sandy, persistently; “ why not try for it? Perhaps it may be feeding close by, in some glade where the trees have sheltered the grass, or where there are tender twigs to be nipped off. Say yes, Bob, and let us start right away.”

The older boy cast a quick look upward, and his gaze rested longest in the quarter where

the forest wall was broken, allowing a view of the gray sky.

“The air is raw, and I’m sure a storm is coming, late though the season is,” he remarked, slowly.

“Well, what of that?” declared Sandy, impatiently. “We are neither sugar nor salt, to be washed away by rain or snow. Just think how mother would smile if she saw us carrying home a nice fat buck, or even a doe? Bob, say yes! This chance is too good to be lost.”

Apparently his argument carried the day. That last stroke swept the more cautious Robert quite off his feet, for he loved his dear little mother above all things on earth, and the thought of pleasing her made him ignore his inner warnings.

“All right, then, Sandy; let’s call it a go. Just to be able to carry home a store of fresh meat we’ll take chances. And now to follow the tracks.”

With that he bent his keen gaze upon the ground, and immediately started along the trail left by the deer, Sandy following close at his heels.

Both lads carried the old-time flint-lock muskets, such as were in general use during those

early days. They served their purpose fairly well, especially when in the steady hands of those who knew life often depended on accuracy of aim. Many woodrangers and trappers, however, had guns with longer barrels, which they called rifles, and capable of sending a patched bullet with unerring skill a great distance.

In and out among the trees the two boys moved along. Not a single word passed between them until at least a mile had been covered. Then Sandy could restrain his impatience no longer. It was always a difficult thing to keep him "bottled up" when speech was concerned, and his brother Bob often declared he would make a good lawyer, or a parson, he liked to hear himself talk so much.

"Are we getting closer, Bob? Is the trail any fresher than before? Oh! I thought I saw something move just then!" he whispered in the other's ear.

"Where?" demanded Bob, instantly, as he turned his head around, a look of concern on his face; for, while the Indians of Virginia gave little trouble to the settlers at that day, they were not always to be trusted.

"Never mind," returned Sandy, with a little

chuckle; "for I see now it was only a poor, scared rabbit bounding away. But how about the deer, brother?"

"We must be near him," said Bob, gravely; "and I believe he will turn out to be a five-prong buck, to judge from the size of his hoofs. Silence, now, and we will go on. Remember to keep a close watch ahead, and, if you get a good sight, send your lead back of his foreleg sure."

"You can depend on me, Bob," replied the younger lad; and it was not boastfulness that made him say this, for he had long since developed into a remarkably clever marksman.

In the fall, when the first snows drifted down through the valleys of Virginia, the settlers always held shooting matches, where the best shots of the country competed for prizes, usually some wild turkeys that had been trapped alive. And more than a few times Sandy had held his own with the celebrated sharpshooters among the buckskin-clad hunters from the trails. No eye was quicker than his to glance along the shiny barrel of a musket; and when he pulled the trigger his lead usually found its mark, even though the target were but the ever moving head of a turkey, whose body was

hidden in the ground, fully an hundred yards distant from the marksman.

Once more the two boys pushed on. Before five minutes passed Bob noticed something that gave him a little concern. He had caught sight of the first snowflake that came scurrying along on the wings of the rising wind. A little thing in itself, but which might mean a tremendous lot to these boys, miles away from home, and surrounded by a trackless forest. In another five minutes, just as he had feared, the snow was beginning to descend heavily, so that his task of following the trail of the deer promised to come to a speedy end, as the ground began to be covered with a white mantle.

There was only one thing that could be done now, if they meant to pursue the hunt any further. Bob of late had been noting the general direction taken by the deer; and they could keep pushing on, each pair of eyes on the alert for signs of the expected quarry.

Now it became necessary to bring to the fore all the knowledge of woodcraft the boys possessed. They must judge at a glance just how a deer would proceed while pushing through the forest, avoiding such dense thickets as

promised to entangle his antlers, and at the same time seeking shelter from possible enemies.

Suddenly Bob came to a stop, and whispered:

“Look ahead to where that pawpaw jungle ends! Something moved there; and blest if I don't think it must be our game!”

Even as he finished speaking, out of the screening hedge leaped a gallant buck, his head thrown back, and every muscle in his frame answering to his fear of human kind.

It was a pretty sight, and one calculated to make the blood bound more quickly through the veins of a hunter; but neither of the boys delayed even one second in order to admire the scene. Their one thought was of the possibility of their eagerly anticipated supply of meat making off on its own rapidly flying hoofs.

Sandy was a bit the quicker in firing, for, being nervous by nature, he knew how to aim more by instinct than by going through a set habit. Still, the two discharges seemed to roll into one; and, with their hearts in their mouths, the young marksmen looked to ascertain what the result of the shots might be.

“Huzza! he is down!” almost shrieked

Sandy, as the big buck made a tremendous bound into the air, and came crashing upon the snow-covered earth, where he tried in vain to regain his feet.

“Stop! Remember what old Reuben told you always to do!” cautioned Bob, as he thrust himself in front of Sandy, already in the act of leaping forward.

“I forgot,” murmured the other, as with trembling hand he started to reload his gun, some of the powder from his horn slipping out of his shaking fingers as he attempted to pour it into the muzzle of the barrel.

Then came a greased bullet in a patch of linen, being pushed down after the powder had been rammed good and hard. To prime the flint-lock gun was no great difficulty, though constant vigilance was needed in order to make sure that the priming, so essential to a discharge, be not shaken from the pan by accident.

“Now let us go up,” said Sandy, after both had reloaded.

“He’s kicking his last,” remarked his brother, quietly, “and there is no fear of our losing him. I wonder now if I missed. You were, as usual, ahead of me in firing, Sandy.

And I saw him quiver even before I pulled trigger, so I know you hit him.”

When they bent over the now motionless quarry it was found that there were *two* bullet-holes in the deer. (Note 2.)

“Yours is the one behind the shoulder, Sandy, and that killed him instantly. He could have run a mile or more with the wound through the body that I gave him. But never mind, we have had great luck, and mother will be pleased when we carry this meat home.”

Bob lost no time in bleeding the game. They were so far away from the cabin that it would be impossible to “tote” the deer there intact; so it was quickly determined to cut up the venison and select the choice portions.

Both boys carried hunting knives, and they set to work without delay. As they labored they became so interested in what they were doing that neither seemed to pay any particular attention to the remarkable change that had come over the weather, until after a while Sandy started to complain that it was getting so dark he could hardly see how to work.

Then an exclamation from his brother caused

him to raise his head. What he saw was anything but reassuring. The snow was coming down between the trees in blinding sheets, driven before a cold wind, that seemed to be growing stronger with every passing minute.

“No getting back to the cabin for us tonight, Sandy,” declared the older one, with a shake of his head. “This promises to be as bad a storm as we’ve had all winter, and even at the shortest you know we’d have a five-hour tramp back home. So we must make the best of a bad bargain and camp here in the woods.”

“Well,” remarked Sandy, whom no danger ever daunted, “anyhow, we’ve got plenty to eat, and can keep warm, unless both of us forgot to bring flint and steel along, which I know is not so, for here are mine in my pouch, and some dry tinder as well.”

By the time they had finished the task of cutting up the deer, and secured all the choice portions in the skin, the forest was swathed in a mantle of white; and, on the wind that screeched so noisily while hurrying past, came new armies of scurrying snowflakes that beat against the faces of the lads until they fairly stung with the pain.

Evidently the young pioneers were in for an experience besides which all previous encounters with snow-storms would pale into utter insignificance.

CHAPTER II

THE CABIN IN THE CLEARING

DAVID ARMSTRONG, the father of the two young hunters, was descended from a fine old Scotch family. At the death of his father he inherited a considerable estate, but the loss of his parent made the thought of remaining in the old home too painful to him, and he decided to leave Scotland and seek a new home. He consequently sold everything he possessed and, with his young wife and little children, sailed for the new country beyond the sea, and settled at Richmond, where he engaged in the tobacco business.

For some years he prospered, but trouble finally overtook him. A relative, whom he had taken into partnership, betrayed his confidence, with the result that one day David awoke to find that he had the experience, while this cousin possessed the money that had been invested.

Even in those primitive days there were courts where those who believed they had been

wronged could seek redress, and David would have failed to do credit to his Scotch ancestry had he not been a fighter. He believed he had a good case against this relative who had swindled him, and he tried to press the matter.

But, somewhat discouraged by the constant delays, he made up his mind at last to leave for a point further west, and begin life anew under more humble conditions.

He had come westward from the region around Richmond, and settled near a small town, where he secured employment at the tobacco warehouse of a certain Jason Diggett, the richest man in that region. He did his work faithfully as the days and months went by, seldom complaining, so long as he had his dearly beloved wife, and his three children to comfort him; yet never ceasing to hope that he would hear good news from Richmond, and receive his own again from the clever relative who had tricked him.

He was anxious to do all he could for his three children, Kate, Robert and Alexander; and sent them regularly to the little school-house, where they learned the rudiments of reading and figuring, which among many per-

sons in those days were considered all the education required to carry one through life.

The family spent some very happy years in the little cabin that stood in a clearing. The boys knew nearly every one in the town; and as they grew older began to show themselves capable of assisting in the task of supporting the family. Often they brought in game from the forest, and in the season their traps yielded them quite a little harvest in the pelts of otter, muskrat, mink, fox, badger and wildcat.

Suddenly, like a bolt out of the blue sky, trouble swooped down upon the Armstrongs. David had some difficulty with his employer, and was discharged, since he was too proud to seek a reconciliation, when he fully believed himself to be in the right.

Then, one night, the tobacco barn of Jason Diggett burned to the ground, entailing quite a loss. Suspicion alighted on David, simply because it was known that between the two men ill feelings existed.

So David was arrested, and held in the town blockhouse for a whole week; but, there being no actual proof against him, he was allowed to go free. That had been more than a month before, and, ever since, most of the people who

had once called themselves his friends had turned their heads aside when by chance they met. The odor of guilt clung to his skirts, for, even though the law had declared it had no evidence upon which to base conviction, people *believed* he must be guilty, since some one had surely set fire to the barn, and who besides David had any grudge against Jason Diggett?

Armstrong fretted greatly over the injustice of such action, and it took all the tact of his wife, Mary, to keep him from doing some rash act.

“If this keeps up much longer, wife,” he would say, after a fresh exhibition of coldness and aloofness on the part of those who had once called him friend, “we must leave here for good, and go further into the wilderness. It is useless for me to look further for work, since no one wishes to employ a *barn-burner!*”

His loving wife would labor to cheer him up as only a loyal woman could. Possessed of a sunny disposition, trusting by nature, and above all imbued with a strong sense of God’s goodness, Mary Armstrong refused to lose heart.

“It will surely come out all right, husband,”

she would say, as her loving hands smoothed the frown away from his forehead; "we must have patience, and do our part. To-morrow, perhaps the day after; but in His good time it will all be well."

And, although David had vowed he would not again seek work in that bitter community, when another day arrived, her sweet influence over him was so great that once more he would stalk forth, moodily, but with his spirit still uncrushed.

It was a momentous time in the history of the colonies. For many months there had been heard mutterings of the storm that was later to break at Lexington and Bunker Hill. Already people were taking sides, even in the more distant settlements, and were either patriots or loyalists, according to the way they looked at things.

But David Armstrong gave little thought to such matters, for his own troubles were so exceedingly weighty that he could think of little else.

There was much talk of daring pioneers journeying still further into that wonderful country beyond the great mountains; and again and again did he brood over the possi-

bilities that might await the forerunners of civilization there.

Those who had made the trip, and returned, gave such glowing descriptions of the amazing fertility of the black soil, and the astounding number of game animals to be had for the mere shooting, that it was small wonder the harassed borderer's mind turned westward many times, and he was only waiting for some climax to arrive ere packing up and moving toward the land of the setting sun.

On the very morning that the two boys started out on their memorable hunt for fresh venison, David had taken new courage, and once more ventured to look for work.

“The very last time, wife, mark you,” he had solemnly declared as he kissed her good-bye, and she knew that finally he had indeed reached the parting of the ways; for, if his quest was now in vain, he would never ask a favor of these town people again.

During the month when David had been idle, and the one that followed his release from the blockhouse strong-room, it can be understood that things were at low ebb in the home of the Armstrongs.

At no time had they been able to accumulate

any amount ahead of their constant needs; so that very soon they hardly knew where to turn for money with which to purchase the few necessities of life.

Robert and Sandy sold what few skins they had collected; then they busied themselves hunting, and trying to trap more animals; but the winter had been unusually severe, and trappers reported a scarcity of pelts.

Recently even little Kate, just fourteen, had hired out to a neighboring family, as the daughters of the pioneers often did, without losing any of their self-respect, or standing.

Mrs. Armstrong worked at her various tasks as the day advanced. Noon came and went, and the sky clouded up with evil portents of snow, for the air was raw and had all the ominous attributes which these woods-dwellers knew presaged a storm.

Frequently she would step outside the humble log cabin to look around, and see whether either the boys or her husband could be coming. Then her troubled eyes would scan the bleak heavens, and note that already the first flakes of snow, forerunners of the mighty storm to come, were drifting along on the

rising wind that was moaning through the sentinel oak at the back of the cabin.

She wished the boys were safe at home, though she was so confident of their ability to take care of themselves, no matter under what difficulties, that she did not as yet once allow herself to fear actual danger to them.

They had all their lives been accustomed to roaming the woods, and knew how to grapple with such emergencies as hunters may expect to meet.

The afternoon had begun to decline, and the snow was coming down heavily, when David arrived home. Little need for his wife to look twice to understand what his dejected manner indicated.

“It’s no use, wife,” he said, moodily, a frown on his strong face; “everything’s working against me here, and I doubt if I have a single real friend in all the community. The poison has done its work, and there is no employment here for a man suspected of being a barn-burner. I’ve been turned away by a man I believed would take my word as quick as my bond. And I tell you I’m done. Never again will I demean myself asking favors on my knees, just because my family may be in need.”

And wise Mary Armstrong, realizing that the strong man had indeed gone to the limit of his strength, knew that there must come a change. It were folly to continue to beat one's head against the wall. Better find some way of less resistance, and allow the current to carry them on.

“ We have each other, David,” she said, sturdily, as became a pioneer wife and mother; “ and as long as health remains we must not complain. See, I give in entirely to you. Let us leave here at the very first chance, and in a new country try to secure contentment, even though we may not find happiness as long as this cloud hangs over your head. Cheer up! With three fine children, and a husband whom I respect and love, I am content. The darkest cloud has a silver lining. Wait, and hope! ”

“ Then you consent that we shall emigrate to the land beyond the mountains, to the banks of that beautiful stream they call the Ohio, of which we have heard so much? ”

It had been a vague dream with David for some time, and the prospect of being able to carry it into actual execution in the near future began to arouse him; so that he threw

off his moody spirits, and showed rising animation.

“ Yes, anything that you think wise,” Mary went on calmly, though her heart was sore, “ I am ready to undertake. But, of course, we could not think of starting until some caravan arrives here in the spring, headed that way. You were telling of one that was expected.”

“ Yes,” said David, eagerly, “ the last time Pat O’Mara, the trapper, was here, he was speaking of that famous hunter, Daniel Boone, and how he had organized an expedition in Carolina that was to pass up along this way in the spring, headed for the mountain passes and the bank of the great Ohio. We must be ready to throw our poor fortunes in with them when they reach here. I only hope and pray that new friends may be more merciful than old ones.”

“ I wish the boys were safe at home, for it promises to be a hard storm, from the looks of things,” said the fond mother, anxiously.

David’s eyes sparkled with a look of pride in his offspring.

“ Fear nothing for those two lads. To Robert the secrets of the woods are as an open book; and I would trust them to even go over

the great mountain trail alone. They have their guns, and will know how to protect themselves from the storm. In due time we shall see them again, Heaven willing.”

It was his turn now to comfort, a new role for David Armstrong; but he knew, better than did his wife, how those half-grown boys had become familiar with the perils of the wilderness, and understood how to meet them almost as well as the oldest and most experienced forest ranger.

The day gradually came to a close, and when evening had drawn near, so that the kettle was singing over the flames, and supper cooking, Mary Armstrong went often to the door to peer out into the howling storm, as if still hoping that her brave boys would show up, like white ghosts, to join them at the humble and scanty repast.

But presently the time came when she and her husband had to sit down to the board alone, for no cheery hail came out of the gloomy night; but even then the mother would not let David see how worried she felt. She insisted upon talking about the Promised Land beyond the mountain chain, and asked him scores of questions concerning it, so that he could not

dream how her mother heart felt cold with new-born fears, and how her ears were ever attuned to the wild music of the raging storm, in which, *somewhere*, far away, she realized her two boys must be caught.

Later grew the hour. David had brought in a goodly supply of firewood, for so long as they could wield an axe there was always a bountiful amount of this at their very door, to be had for the cutting. Then they prepared to retire for the night, the settler in a better humor than he had been exhibiting for weeks; for at last he began to see a way out of the terrible difficulty that had so long been confronting them.

And while he slept, and dreamed of that wonderful land of plenty along the border of the Ohio River, Mary lay awake, her gentle heart filled with unspoken prayers concerning the safety of their boys.

CHAPTER III

CAUGHT IN THE SNOW - STORM

“WHAT makes it so dark, Bob?” asked the younger brother, as they finished tying up the best part of the venison in the skin which had been removed from the deer.

“Night is coming on ahead of time, and I reckon it will be one we’ll not forget in a hurry, either,” replied the other, calmly; for Robert seldom gave way to excitement, leaving that to Sandy.

“Then the sooner we find some place for a camp the better,” remarked the latter. “The wind keeps growing colder all the while, and it bites like a knife when it drives the hail against your face. Do you know, I think I heard a wolf howl a little while ago?”

“That would hardly be surprising,” was Bob’s reply as he shouldered the meat wrapped up in the deerskin, leaving to his brother the two muskets and the small game. “It was only a few days ago that Amiel Teene had an

adventure with the pests not ten miles away from his cabin.”

“ Yes, and he said he had never seen them so savage,” declared Sandy, glancing around at the snowy forest, as if in imagination he could already see a host of gaunt gray forms leaping toward them.

“ The winter has been unusually long and hard, and, as we happen to know, Sandy, game has been scarce. Perhaps it was so up in the mountains, and the animals have been pushed to venture nearer the settlements than at most times. This storm will make them even worse.”

“ Then, if we should meet a pack to-night, the scent of this fresh meat would make them crazy to get at us,” said Sandy, reflectively, as he fell in alongside his brother.

“ Yes, I can easily believe it,” grunted the larger youth, who had quite a load on his back, and could afford just then to expend little of his wind in conversation.

“ And perhaps we might have to take to a tree, just as I did two years ago, waiting for dawn to drive the critters away; eh, Bob? ”

“ Not on such a night as this, brother,” remarked the one addressed. “ You forget that

it was not bitter cold weather when you met with your little experience. To-night, if we climbed into a tree, we might freeze to death before morning."

"Then what can we do? I am sure I heard a far-off howl again just then; and perhaps those sharp-nosed rascals have already scented a dinner," and Sandy pushed a little closer to his companion, deeply stirred.

It was no imaginary peril that hung over their heads. A single wolf might play the part of a coward, and shrink from mankind; but when gathered in a pack the beasts became an object of dread to every settler on the border. More than one man, in the history of Virginia, had been dragged down by starving wolves; and of all times of the year the end of a hard winter was the worst.

"I had thought of that, Sandy," the elder brother went on; "and remembered that, just before we sighted the deer, I had seen a place that offered us a refuge. It is toward that point I am now trying to lead the way. Keep your eyes open for a fallen tree. I think we must be near the spot right now."

"And there it is," announced Sandy, joyfully, as he pointed ahead.

They were in fact right upon it, though the sifting, driving snow had, up to that moment, hidden from their eager eyes all signs of the wished-for goal.

And when Sandy saw what a fortress was afforded them by the hole in the ground, where the roots of the tree had once grown, he was ready to throw up his cap and shout with satisfaction.

At some time in the remote past a great wind storm had evidently uprooted this forest monarch; but, in falling, it had not quite lain flat, so that, twenty feet from the roots, one might even walk underneath the trunk.

A great cavity had been torn in the earth, and, as it happened that the upturned roots and the trunk were toward the storm, the barrier would afford a fine shelter against its biting force.

There, in the opening left by the uprooting of the great tree, they could make themselves fairly comfortable. Sandy even saw possibilities for fortifying themselves within the hole, so that they might defy an attack on the part of the fiercest pack of wolves that ever roamed through those woods.

The boys immediately set to work with a

vim. They had travelled many miles during the progress of the hunt, and it might reasonably be expected that both would be tired; but one would never dream of such a thing, judging from the vigor with which they hewed firewood, and proceeded to arrange their novel camp.

Accustomed to roughing it from early childhood, Bob and his brother asked but little in order to find a reasonable degree of comfort. Given a fire and a warm bite to eat, they envied not a king his crown. And, if the bite were lacking, why, the fire was not to be sneezed at. In those early days boys knew nothing of luxuries.

While Sandy labored with the heavy camp hatchet, the elder brother began to get the fire underway, for long practice had made him an expert with flint and steel. Some small sticks were heaped up in a loose manner, and a bit of dry tinder shoved under it; then, with several deft strokes of the steel, sparks were sent into its inflammable heart, and a tiny blaze sprang up, which was fostered until it had seized upon the larger wood.

Things began to look much more comfortable to the young pioneers after that fire shed its

ruddy glow upon their camp. And when Bob had sliced several fair portions of the fresh venison, and had thrust them near the fire on the ends of long splinters of wood, the odor that presently began to arise made Sandy sniff the air, and try to restrain his voracious appetite.

They had nothing to drink with the meal. Tea was worth too much at that time for boys to carry any of the precious stuff off on their tramps; and as for coffee, it was an almost unknown beverage with the colonists.

After all, as the famous Daniel Boone was often heard to declare, it was astonishing what few actual necessities primitive man must have in order to keep him in fighting trim. And Boone patterned his life after the redmen of that country beyond the mountain chain, of whom he probably knew more than any living border man of the day.

“This is fine,” observed Sandy, a little later.

They were sitting close to the fire and devouring their roast venison with infinite gusto. No doubt the pampered boy of to-day might hardly have relished the rude fare; but these pioneer lads were made of different stuff, and thankful for exceedingly small things.

“ Yes,” replied Bob quietly; “ but we must get to work quickly, and add to the pile of fire-wood, as well as barricade the open side of the hole.”

“ Did you hear it, too? ” demanded his brother, instantly.

“ Yes, and more than one wolf answered the long howl. They are sending signals across the forest. I think we will have visitors before the night is over.”

Sandy hurried through the remainder of his primitive supper, almost bolting the last few morsels. Then he once more started to make good use of the sharp hatchet. While he worked after this fashion his brother began to search for objects with which to fill up the gap to leeward as much as possible.

“ Good! ” Sandy presently heard him exclaim from the midst of the blinding snow close by. “ Here lie several old logs. This way, and give me a hand. They will make a grand fort.”

It required considerable effort to drag the half-rotted logs into position; but where there is a will there is nearly always a way, and in the end the object of their desires was accomplished.

“ Could hardly be much better, I take it,” was Sandy’s enthusiastic comment, as he stood back and surveyed the result of their labors.

“ No, and I wager it would be a pretty rash wolf that would dare try to leap that barrier,” remarked his brother, now taking a turn with the hatchet, as the size of the pile of fuel did not altogether please him, with a long night ahead and that bitter wind rushing through the woods.

Finally both were too wearied to attempt anything more, so they sat down alongside the cheery blaze, to rest ere trying to sleep. One might think it rather a hazardous thing to lose themselves in slumber without any covering; but they knew many of the tricks of the pioneers of the day, and that, if they kept their feet warm, all would be well. Besides, both boys had been warmly clad when starting forth on their search for game, for they had an industrious mother, whose spinning-wheel seldom knew a day’s rest. (Note 3.)

It was decided that a watch must be kept, since they were surrounded by so many perils. If the fire went out they might have a foot or hand frozen, and the absence of the blaze must encourage the forest howlers to make an at-

tack, eager to secure a share of that fresh venison.

Bob had placed the meat, again wrapped up in the skin, as far back as possible under the matted roots of the fallen monarch of the forest. Both boys were grimly determined that they would fight desperately to retain possession of their prize, since that store of food meant much to the dear ones back at the humble cabin home.

“What are you thinking about, Bob?” asked Sandy, as he watched the play of the fire across his brother’s resolute face, and noted the expression, almost wistful, that came upon it at times.

“It was about father,” he replied, speaking the word tenderly, for David Armstrong had ever been a kind and affectionate parent, and was fairly worshipped by his little flock.

“Yes, I knew that was it,” said Sandy, quickly. “Oh! I do hope he has been successful in finding work to-day, for he declared it would be the last time he would try. What do you suppose we can do if he fails, Bob?”

“There is only one thing,” came the reply, with compressed lips; “we must leave here, and go further west. I know father is think-

ing seriously about it. The last time that jolly trapper, Pat O'Mara, was here, father questioned him often about the stories he had heard Colonel Boone tell of that wonderful country beyond the mountains, and the beautiful Ohio River."

"I think I should like that," observed the impetuous Sandy, always eager to see new sights, and filled with the enthusiasm of a light-hearted boy. "If half they say about that country be true, it must be glorious. And the hunting and trapping we could do, Bob! Yes, I hope father decides to join fortunes with the first company of people passing through here."

Bob said no more. He knew that the little mother would be sorry to break many ties; but also that she would utter no word to dissuade her husband, when the time came. And perhaps the more thoughtful Bob could also foresee better than Sandy what new perils might await the daring pilgrims who ventured into the hunting-grounds of the warlike Shawanee Indians.

Presently he made Sandy lie down to snatch an hour's sleep, when he promised to awaken him so that he in turn might watch. This rule



“DISCOVERED A HALF CIRCLE OF GLEAMING YELLOW EYES
WATCHING HIM.”

was carried out, and each of them had managed to secure quite a little sleep by the time the night was two-thirds passed.

It was Sandy's turn on guard. The fire was burning briskly, the storm seemed to be slackening up somewhat, and everything looked so promising that the boy grew a trifle careless. He allowed himself to doze beside the fire, his musket between his knees. This was, after all, hardly to be wondered at, as any one knows who, being desperately in need of sleep, tries to withstand the soothing heat of a warm blaze.

Perhaps Sandy may have been dreaming of boyish troubles with some of the young fellows of the town, once their warm friends, but just now commencing to ape their parents in turning the cold shoulder toward the Armstrong family.

Be that as it may, Sandy awoke with a start. He found the fire had gone down so that only now and then a tongue of flame shot upward from the log that had been burning so fiercely the last thing he remembered.

And, as some grinding sound caught his ear, he glanced up and discovered a half circle of gleaming yellow eyes watching him from over the top of the barricade!

CHAPTER IV

THE WOLF PACK

“ BOB! Wake up! The wolves! ”

The shout rang out above the noise of the still whining wind. Aroused from a sound sleep by the startling cry, Bob struggled to a sitting position. Fortunately, he was a boy not easily rattled. The sight of those gleaming eyes told him what had happened, and it was perhaps more through instinct than anything else that he immediately pushed his musket forward and let fly at the nearest pair.

Sandy was not far behind, and the double report made a crash that seemed to produce a temporary panic among the gaunt callers. They hastily withdrew, though with many snarls and long-drawn howls.

Both boys were now on their feet, ready to swing their guns by the barrels if necessary, and use them as a further means of defence. Seeing that their enemies had beaten a temporary retreat, Bob sprang to the fire, and,

kicking the partly burned log with his foot, stirred the flame into new life.

“Throw on some small wood, Sandy!” he called, as he bent over the barricade to ascertain whether their lead had been wasted, or found its mark.

“Did we get anything?” demanded the younger boy, understanding the object of Robert’s survey, and being possessed of the frontier hunter’s instinct, which looked upon the loss of a charge of powder and shot as next door to a sin.

“One is lying here, and from the snarling over yonder I take it they are tearing the wounded fellow to pieces,” replied the older boy, as he proceeded to reload his musket.

“Well, I want that skin the worst way,” ventured Sandy; “and if we leave the beggar outside the fort they will spoil it. So keep a watch while I climb over and drag the wolf inside.”

“Be careful,” warned Bob, who knew his brother’s rash inclinations only too well. He stood ready, with both guns within reach, so that, if at any time Sandy seemed to be in peril, he could pour in a hot fire that must frighten the four-footed enemy away again.

But Sandy, himself, knew better than to take too much risk. No sooner had he seized hold of the dead animal than he started to move backward toward the logs that had been piled up to form a rampart.

“Hurry!” cried the voice of the one on guard. “They are coming with a rush, and from three quarters! Leave the hide to them, and save yourself, brother!”

But Sandy was an obstinate lad. He had made up his mind to possess the skin of the dead wolf, and did not want to relinquish it to the tender mercies of the pack.

Having dragged it close to the logs, he exerted himself to the utmost to give the weighty animal a toss that would accomplish his purpose. Nevertheless, but for the prompt assistance of Bob, who clutched the beast and dragged it over, Sandy must have failed in his endeavor.

“Quick! Climb up! They are here!” he heard shrilled in his ear.

In his hurry his foot slipped and he fell backward to the ground. Just above him there burst out a flash, and a heavy report instantly followed. Sandy knew what it meant, and that his faithful brother was firing at the

advancing pack in order to stop their rush.

He struggled to his feet, and commenced once more to clamber up the rude fortification, at the same time shouting at the top of his voice. This was done with a purpose, for he understood full well that, like most cowardly animals, wolves greatly fear the voice of man.

Bob, too, was exerting himself to the utmost. Again came that tremendous crash, as the second musket was discharged close to Sandy's ear.

Then an eager hand laid hold of him, and he felt himself dragged over the topmost log!

Both boys were panting for breath, but, thrusting one gun into Sandy's hands, Bob started to hastily reload the other. They could hear their enemies not ten feet away, snarling and snapping terribly. It needed no explanation to tell Sandy what was going on out there in the snow; for he knew that wolves are cannibals if pressed with hunger.

"It was a pretty close shave, Bob!" he exclaimed, after he had rammed a bullet home in his gun, and fixed the priming in the pan.

"And a foolhardy act," returned the other, gravely. "If you had missed your footing a second time you would have been pulled down

in spite of all I could do, and that would have been the end of us.”

Sandy felt abashed. He knew perfectly well that he had been guilty of a reckless feat that might have cost both of them their lives; for without doubt Bob would have leaped over the barrier to his assistance, and shared his sad fate.

Perhaps thoughts of the dear ones at home, who would have mourned them so grievously, may have caused the boy to resolve upon a wiser course the next time he found himself tempted to take hazardous chances.

They stood on guard, and waited to see what their enemies would do when they had finished their meal.

“ I hope they will go away, and leave us alone,” said Sandy, uneasily.

“ That would be almost too good to be true,” remarked Bob, who knew more about the habits of animals than his brother. “ Instead, I fear that the taste of food they have had will only make them more savage.”

“ Look! they are beginning to creep closer again! ” exclaimed Sandy, a minute later, with a feeling of renewed uneasiness.

“ Then we had better begin to shoot again,

and make every bullet count. Let me start the ball rolling, boy," said Bob, as he picked out a dark form advancing slowly over the white snow.

Resting his musket across the upper log, he took a careful aim and fired. With the report a series of howls burst forth, and many forms were seen dashing this way and that. Some fled, only to come back again when they scented a new feast, and in another minute the wolf that had fallen before the gun of the young pioneer was affording his mates an additional scrap of dinner.

"Now, wait until I have reloaded, and then you do as well," remarked the calm Bob, who had learned many valuable lessons from older hunters; and he knew how dangerous it would be for them to be caught with empty guns, should their foes attempt to rush the shelter in a body.

Sandy, nothing loth, picked out his victim, and when his brother gave the word he pressed the trigger with more or less delight.

"That is one the less, I reckon," he remarked, as he quickly dropped the butt of the musket on the frozen ground, and commenced to handle his powder horn, to measure out suf-

ficient of the precious black grains for another charge.

“ But I fear that for every beast we drop two new ones come out of the woods,” said Bob, believing that they should understand the worst, and not deceive themselves with false hopes.

Sandy was for keeping up the fusillade, but his wiser brother had already recognized the folly of wasting their scanty ammunition so hastily.

“ How many more bullets have you in your pouch? ” he asked, quietly.

“ Just three,” replied the other, his enthusiasm checked.

“ And I have only four,” Bob went on; “ so you see at the most we can only account for seven of the beasts. After that it would be hand to hand. We must hold off as long as we can, reserving our ammunition for a desperate extremity.”

“ How long will it be before dawn comes? ” asked Sandy, anxiously.

Of watches or clocks the pioneers had none; but most boys knew how to tell time from the stars, or from mere instinct; just as one accustomed to arousing at a certain hour realizes

that the time has come, although all may be darkness about him.

Bob scanned the dull heavens through the branches of the trees. And as it happened there came a little break in the clouds just then, through which he caught a glimpse of the moon.

“ I think that it will only be an hour now before daylight comes,” he said with a sense of satisfaction in his voice; “ and, besides, the storm is at an end, for there the moon shows through the clouds.”

“ But the wolves are creeping closer all the time,” declared Sandy, as he looked over the barrier. “ Just see, there must be an awful heap of the critters, Bob. Do you think they will try to climb over here? ”

“ It may be,” replied the other, “ but so long as we can wield our guns they shall not get a footing inside our fort. Shoot only as a last resort. And if the very worst comes — ”

“ Yes, what then, Bob? ”

“ Try to climb up to the topmost root above. Perhaps we might manage to hold out until daylight frightens them away. But here they come, Sandy! ”

In another minute the two boys were striking

at the heads of such daring animals as ventured to show above the top of the low rampart. The heavy muskets were fair weapons of offence for such work; though more than once Bob warned his impulsive brother to be careful, lest he strike a log and break his gun, which would be a serious catastrophe, indeed.

Their quarters were so confined that it was only with considerable difficulty they managed to strike fairly. But many a venturesome wolf was knocked back when those rising and falling muskets came in contact with his hairy head, and, amidst the savage howls that arose without the barricade, snarls of pain might have been distinguished.

At times the work slackened somewhat, allowing the panting boys a chance to catch their breath, but only to go at it again with renewed energy.

How the long minutes dragged by, with all this tremendous excitement stirring their blood to fever heat! Sandy cast many a despairing look up at the moon, now plainly seen in the clearing heavens, as though he fancied that it must be remaining stationary, and the night becoming interminable.

Would morning never come? Must they

carry on this bitter struggle only to be overwhelmed by superior numbers in the end?

Three times now one of them had found it necessary to fire, when things seemed to have reached a state approaching desperation.

“ Courage! ” shouted Bob, as he brought his gunstock down on the head of a hungry wolf. “ Look to the east, boy! The dawn has come at last! ”

It was even so, and, thrilled with renewed hope, Sandy was enabled to keep up the good fight until by degrees the wolves began to sneak away, until finally the last of the savage horde had gone.

Would they ever forget that stirring night? Sandy believed nothing could exceed the excitement through which they had just passed; but, perhaps, if they migrated to that mysterious country beyond the great chain of mountains, there amid new scenes he might find an opportunity to change his mind.

Over the fire they cooked another meal of the fine venison which they had saved from the half-starved wolves.

“ And now to head for home! ” cried Sandy, as he took up the pack to show that he wished to do his share of the burden-carrying.

Forgotten were the aches of the night in the thought of once more rejoining those so dear to them about the family hearth, where the fire blazed in the wide-throated chimney, and the brass kettle bubbled on the hob.

They had been tramping for half an hour, steadily onward, when Bob called a halt, declaring that it was high time Sandy turned the bundle of meat over to him.

This the other was really not at all loth to do, for he had been staggering of late through the deep snow, as his burden began to tell on him. Still, not for worlds would the proud boy have confessed that he was actually tired.

Bob fashioned the hitch a little better, so that it would rest easier across his shoulder. He had just leaned forward, intending to give the bundle a sudden hoist, when he stopped in the act.

From some point not a great way off there came the sudden report of, not a musket with its heavy boom, but a hunter's clear-toned rifle.

And accompanying the sound they caught a loud voice raised in an excited shout, as though some one was striving against difficulties that threatened to overcome him.

CHAPTER V

WHEN KATE CAME HOME

“ SOME one is in trouble, Bob! ” cried the younger Armstrong boy, as these sounds came floating to their ears.

“ Yes, and a white man, too, ” said Bob, as he tossed the bundle of venison up into the crotch of a big oak tree close at hand. “ We must see if we can help him. ”

Sandy was nothing loth. He knew full well that the unwritten law of the woods compelled every man to extend assistance when he met with one in need, and from the nature of the racket they could imagine that something quite out of the ordinary must be taking place.

The two lads set off on a run, eager to reach the spot as quickly as possible. True, they were rather short of ammunition just then, but so long as a single load remained to their guns they were ready to use it in behalf of any one in distress.

“ Listen, brother, ” said Sandy, when they

had covered some little distance; "surely we have heard that voice before."

"Yes," returned Bob, with a little laugh, "it is our old friend, Pat O'Mara, without a doubt; but what can he have stumbled into now? Pat is always looking for a 'ruction,' as he calls it, and generally finding what he wants."

"Perhaps the wolves, after leaving us, may have treed him," suggested Sandy, with something like a broad grin appearing on his freckled face.

But the other shook his head in the negative. He seldom jumped at conclusions as did Sandy, and usually weighed his words before speaking.

"Hardly that, boy," he observed; "we would have heard their howls before this. And besides, we have good reason to know that wolves are arrant cowards in the daytime."

"Well, let us run on again, for evidently Pat is in need of help. This may pay him back for dragging me out of that quicksand last summer, when I thought my last hour had arrived," and Sandy once more started on a trot in the direction of the spot whence the shouts arose.



CHARLES LIVINGSTON BULL.

“ KICKING FURIOUSLY AT A LEAN BLACK BEAR, JUST BELOW HIM.”

Soon another sound mingled with the cries of the Irish trapper.

“ It must be a bear! ” said Sandy over his shoulder, as he ran.

Bob was of the same opinion, for the ferocious growls that came down the breeze could surely have been produced by no other among the woods creatures.

Then they burst through a thicket, and suddenly came in sight of a spectacle so remarkable that both boys stood still to gape and grin.

A rather stout man was sitting up in the wreck of an old tree, kicking furiously at a lean black bear, just below him, that was striking with his claws in the endeavor to fasten upon the legging of the other's foot.

While he thus kicked, the man in fringed buckskin was constantly talking, often giving vent to a shout of joy when his foot chanced to land against the head of his hairy enemy.

On the ground lay a rifle; but the bear did not seem to be seriously wounded in any way, which fact puzzled the boys not a little, because Pat O'Mara had the reputation of being a marvellous shot, and they remembered having heard the report of the gun a short time back.

When he saw the new arrivals, the trapper let out a cheer that told of solid satisfaction. And indeed, to tell the truth, his situation was anything but pleasant, and the end uncertain, with that wicked old bear determined to get him by fair means or foul.

“Haroo!” shouted the trapper, waving his coonskin cap vigorously above his red head; “sure yees are the byes to hilp me out av throuble, so ye be! Alriddy he scents me frinds, and is backin’ down out av the three. Just take up alongside the fut av the same, and put a flea in his ear before he can turn to do yees any harrm. Haroo! Make a clane job av the same, remimber. An’ wan at a time, av ye plaze!”

“You take him first, Sandy,” said Bob, with his usual thoughtfulness, always willing that his brother should carry off the honors when there was a choice.

He stood alongside, and held his musket in readiness, so that in case the first leaden missile failed to finish old Bruin he might join in the affair.

The bear, while still angry, was evidently considerably concerned over the coming of reinforcements.

Sandy knew how to do the part of the business that had been entrusted to him.

“Stiddy, lad, stiddy!” warned the trapper, already following the bear down the tree. “Make a sure job av it now; and don’t spile the pelt!”

Bang! went the heavy charge which was in Sandy’s flint-lock musket. The bear immediately fell in a heap on the ground. Bob stood there, ready to add the finishing touch if absolutely necessary; but among hunters it is always understood that there shall be no interference at such times unless positively needed; and the game had been placed in Sandy’s hands.

And in this case there was no need, for the bear, after making a desperate attempt to struggle to his feet, dropped, and lay still; whereupon Sandy and the good-natured Irish trapper united in a cheer that made the woods ring again and again.

“Afther all, it is Sandy’s pelt, and it’s glad I am he had the good sinse to sind his bullet back av the forelig instid av liftin’ the baste’s hid,” declared the man who had been rescued from the tree.

“But how comes it that we found you in

such a queer scrape, Pat?" asked Bob, with a twinkle in his eye; for he knew very well something must have gone amiss, or the usually clever woodsman would not have found himself in so sore a strait.

"Arrah! it's ashamed I am to till yees, me byes; but sure thot was a time Patsy found himself up the wrong tree," admitted the other, who was so good-natured that he could even laugh at a joke on himself.

"And not much of a tree at that, I should say," remarked Sandy dryly, as he surveyed the stump which had been the scene of the trapper's adventure. "Seems to me, Pat, that if I wanted to climb a tree, and fight it out with a bear, I would pick a bigger one than this rotten old thing."

"Oh! ye wud, eh? Phat if the bear was so clost till yer heels that ye had to shin up anything at all?" objected Pat, with a comical grin.

"Well, in that case no one could blame you," returned Bob. "Tell us how it came you failed to kill the beast when you fired."

"Sure, and ye are mistaken, Bob; niver a shot did I take at the ould beggar," said the other, positively.

The boys looked at each other.

“ But surely we heard a shot,” observed Sandy.

“ Yis, but that was the bear shootin’, I give ye my word,” the man in buckskin avowed.

“ Do you mean to tell us that the bear fired your gun at you? ” questioned Sandy, who knew the joking propensity of the jolly Irish trapper.

“ Whirra! now, who said he fired *at* me? Afther chasing me up here the ugly ould baste took a notion to scratch at me gun down on the ground; and as by bad luck the hammer was back, bedad if he didn’t manage somehow to pull the trigger. Sure, if ye look here, yees can see the hole the bullet made in the butt av the tree! ”

At this frank declaration on the part of the trapper Sandy was unable to keep a straight face any longer, but broke out into a roar. Nor was Pat long in joining him, seeming to think it a fine joke.

“ But afther all it was the bear that hild the small ind av the sthick,” the hero of the adventure remarked as, with knife in hand, he started to remove the heavy skin of the victim. Sandy tramped back to secure the venison

from the crotch in the oak, while Bob aided the trapper.

Pat was a roving blade. He loved the wide expanse of wilderness, and had made several long trips into the west, though as yet never as far as Colonel Boone and his party had gone. He had always been a good friend of the Armstrongs, and was particularly fond of the two brothers.

After about an hour's delay the boys, accompanied by O'Mara, made a start for the cabin in the clearing, each one well loaded with packages of meat. The bear had not been in very good condition, having hibernated all winter, and lived upon his fat; but still the experienced trapper knew just what portions to carry along, such as would afford good stews to the hungry Armstrongs.

It was just noon when they came in sight of the cabin. Of course it was the anxious mother who sighted the boys first, as she stood within the open doorway, shading her eyes with her hand so as to shut out the glare of the sun on the snow.

Soon the newcomers were sitting in front of the big blaze in the yawning fireplace, where a pot bubbled and gave out appetizing odors,

telling the story of their adventures; while David, the look of concern gone for the time being from his face, undid the packages of supplies that had been secured.

Indeed it was a happy little party that sat around the plain deal table. What mattered it that the chairs were home-made, that Sandy even had to utilize a three-legged stool; that instead of boards the cabin had only a hard earthen floor; while there was an utter absence of anything beyond the absolute necessities of existence, as lived in those primitive times? (Note 4.)

Love dwelt there, and smoothed all the rough edges. Looking into the proud and apparently happy face of the little mother the two boys were pleased to think fortune had been so very kind, and allowed them to bring home such a goodly supply of meat; for the larder was almost bare.

Pat was always the life of any party. When he chose to exert himself things went on with a whirl, and there was much merriment. If Mr. Armstrong meant to ask his advice about the plans he was forming connected with their emigration to the new country beyond the horizon in the west, he held his peace just then, not

wishing to arouse the boys as yet; for he knew Sandy's impetuous ways, and how the facts must soon become public property once he learned them.

The thing that worried David Armstrong most was his uncertainty as to where he could secure money enough to fit out for the long journey. They really needed at least two horses, upon which the bedding and extra clothing, as well as cooking utensils, could be loaded; for no one would think of carrying anything else over such an unknown road, hundreds of miles into the untrodden wilderness, where most of the travelling must be done over the winding buffalo trails.

However, he had a plan, thanks to a suggestion on the part of his thoughtful wife, and with the assistance of Pat O'Mara he fancied he could secure what he wished so earnestly, a loan from a man he had once befriended, and who was now well-to-do.

They had just finished their meal when Sandy discovered something through the little window near which he happened to be sitting.

"Why, would you believe it, mother, here comes sister Kate!" he exclaimed.

All of them made a start to leave the table; and then, influenced perhaps by some hidden fear, they turned to exchange glances. Could anything have happened that the girl was coming home at this unusual hour; for the cabin where she had been employed was half a mile away?

The door opened to admit a pretty little girl with flaxen curls, just now sadly awry; and the eye of Mrs. Armstrong saw instantly that Kate had certainly been indulging in a good cry, something she was seldom guilty of doing, being possessed of a sunny disposition very like her mother's, though perhaps she had also a dash of her father's peppery nature.

At sight of the family Kate was unable to restrain her feelings any longer, for again the tears began to flow down her rosy cheeks.

“ Why, Kate, my child, what has happened? Why are you here, when your duty is at the Hodgkins? ” asked Mrs. Armstrong, hastening to throw a reassuring arm around the shoulders of the slight figure that was shaking with emotion.

The girl looked up, the tears shining in her blue eyes. There was also a flash of temper to be seen there, and evidently Kate had been

recently aroused to a point where she could stand things no longer.

“ I am done with the Hodgkins,” she cried, stamping her little foot on the clay floor; “ I will never go back there again! I hate them, every one! Oh! it was so mean, so cowardly to say that! ”

Mrs. Armstrong turned pale, and her husband said something under his breath, as they exchanged uneasy glances.

“ Tell us, what did they dare say to you? ” demanded Sandy, gritting his teeth.

“ They mocked me, and said my father was a barn-burner! ” sobbed the girl, bitterly.

CHAPTER VI

THE DIE IS CAST

“ SAY it again, child! ” roared the head of the little family, as he jumped to his feet, his strong features working.

“ David, be careful; let me mother the girl a bit, until she gets over her cry! ” said Mrs. Armstrong; and as usual her soothing voice gained the mastery over the temper of the impulsive man.

Bob and Sandy exchanged looks. Already smarting under the injustice of many who had called themselves friends in times past, this new indignity aroused all the Scotch combativeness in their natures.

Instinctively they clenched their fists, and drew together, as though by mutual sympathy. The same thought had flashed into each mind — that *something* must be done to check this rising tide before it utterly overwhelmed the Armstrong family.

The mother saw that look, and in her heart

understood. Proud she might be of the love that influenced her boys; still there was something higher than loyalty by which she must be governed, and this was duty.

She managed to draw the whole sad story from the girl, amid several little tear-storms. Then she soothed and quieted Kate, who in the shelter of that motherly breast found comfort and presently dried her tears.

The Irish trapper was a witness of this little excitement. He frowned, too, for his nature was impulsive, and he keenly sympathized with his friends. But at the same time more than once a ghost of a smile would chase across his jovial face. Evidently Pat O'Mara was thinking of the plans which he had been forming, and by means of which he hoped to influence the Armstrongs to leave this hateful community, where their worth was not appreciated.

A short time later Bob gave Sandy a sly dig in the ribs, and made a quick motion with his head. Apparently the younger brother understood what was meant, for soon afterwards, when he thought he was unobserved, he slipped out of the cabin.

Just as he expected, he found Bob awaiting him under the trees where bubbled up the

spring which, winter and summer, supplied them with the clearest of water.

And Bob was evidently in a mighty serious frame of mind, even for him. His face looked gloomy and forbidding, while he continually gnawed his upper lip, after a fashion he had when deeply aroused.

Sandy recognized the signs. He had seen them on several occasions before. Once a settlement bully — for they had them in those early days just the same as now — was engaged in the, to him, delightful task of abusing a lad much smaller than himself, when the Armstrongs came upon the scene. The bully had a crony at hand, just as big as himself, and snapped his fingers at Bob when the other asked him to desist. Then it was that Sandy had seen his brother's face assume the same expression that it carried now.

Unable to stand the sight of such cowardly practices, Bob had attacked the fellow, and, spurred on by the righteousness of his cause, succeeded in giving him the beating he so richly deserved, while Sandy and the abused boy took care of the bully's friend.

There were other cases of a similar character, too, and Sandy would never forget a single

one of them. To him his brother Bob was the embodiment of all that was noble in a boy.

“There is no other way, Sandy,” said the older one, shaking his head, as though he had a disagreeable duty to perform, which could not be evaded.

“You are right,” declared Sandy, hotly. “I know, and you know, who is to blame for those children saying such things. Did not we hear their father, Abner Hodgkins, say almost the same thing just three days ago, when we passed him at the door of the alehouse?”

“Yes,” said Bob, between his teeth, “and how red he turned when he knew that we must have heard him. And he is the man our father once helped when he was sorely distressed! This insult can only be wiped out in one way.”

“In only one way, brother,” breathed Sandy.

“And since mother has brought father to her way of thinking, it falls on us to give Abner Hodgkins his lesson,” went on Bob, his eyes taking on a steely glitter at thought of the many ill turns that had of late been showered on their heads.

“But we must not let mother know,” ventured the younger brother.

“ Surely not. Mother would never consent. In her eyes only the last necessity excuses fighting. After it is all over she will forgive us,” said Bob, his voice unconsciously becoming very tender.

“ Perhaps they will have some care how they let their wicked tongues wag after they hear what has happened to one tattler,” went on Sandy.

“ Then you are with me? ” asked the elder brother, eagerly.

“ The sooner the better! ” cried Sandy, impulsive as usual; “ let us go now, and strike while the iron is hot! ”

“ Agreed. For Kate said he had arrived home just as she left, for he called out after her to know where she was going. I am ready, Sandy! ”

The fact that the man under discussion was one of the most muscular in all that border community did not seem to worry the two boys at all, for they were fairly burning with a desire to avenge the constant insults cast upon their loved ones.

Grasping the arm of Sandy, Bob turned around to hurry away ere any one could see them, and, guessing their mission, bring it to

a halt. Then he caught his breath, and his pale face took on the color of confusion. For he found himself confronted by his mother, the very last person in all the world whom he would have wished to see under such conditions.

While listening to Kate's pitiful story she had observed the signal that passed between them. Understanding her boys, she knew what thoughts must be passing through their heated brains. And when they slipped away, unobserved as they believed, that fond heart had lost no time in following.

"I hope, my sons," she said sweetly, as she placed a hand on an arm of each, "that you are not thinking of doing aught that would only add to our troubles. Heaven knows that we have enough to bear now. Two wrongs, you know, never yet made a right. We must bear our cross, knowing that in good season this bitter cloud will pass away. Promise me that you will neither of you seek Abner Hodgkins, nor have one word to say to him should you meet!"

The two confused boys looked at each other rather whimsically. They knew they could refuse their mother nothing. And perhaps, too,

at that moment they realized the utter folly of the course they had mapped out.

So they promised, and, with an arm about the waist of each, she accompanied them back to the cabin.

The balance of that day passed slowly. Every one was uneasy save possibly Pat O'Mara, whose jolly disposition could never be cast down. And that evening, after supper, as they gathered around the blazing fire, he exerted himself as never before to sway the minds of these good friends.

The boys sat there on the bench that stood against the wall, and listened with wide-open ears when by degrees the trapper came around to the entrancing subject of that magical country whose beauties he seemed never to tire of telling. David Armstrong and his wife harkened also, but said little, leaving it to Bob and his brother to ask questions.

It was a cozy picture. The flames darted up the wide-throated chimney and took the place of the customary candle in lighting the room, glancing from the walls, where the chinks between the roughly hewn logs had been filled with hardened clay, and then whitewashed.

Herbs hung from the rafters overhead. High

up alongside the chimney several packages of the dried venison Sandy disliked so much had their places. The shiny brass kettle, an heirloom in the family, stood upon the hob near the flames, and occasionally sang a low accompaniment to the trapper's enticing tales.

Would the new country offer them as comfortable a home as this? After all, so long as the mother were spared, it must ever be her deft hand that made home what it was; and no matter whether here in Virginia, or far off on the banks of the storied Ohio, it would be the same.

“ But how about the Indians, Pat? ” asked Sandy finally. “ You have told us little of the red men. Are they disposed to be friendly; or would we have to fight whenever we ran across them? ”

“ That is the only darrk spot to the picture, me byes,” returned the trapper, with a sigh. “ Sorry am I to say the same, but the riddivels are all for makin' throuble. But 'tis numbers that may hould thim in check. Troth, if enough whites iver r'ach the shore of that enchantin' river, they kin bid the Injuns defiance. In union there is strength, ye know,

Sandy, bye. 'Tis thim same rid divils that gives me pain in me hearrt."

To the boys, however, this was not so serious a drawback. In common with most young fellows of the day they had a contempt for the valor of the native sons of the forest. It was not so with the gentle mother; and her eyes involuntarily sought those of her husband, while she shivered at the thought of the loneliness that must encompass pilgrims who emigrated beyond the mountain chain, losing themselves in the untracked wilderness.

But David was himself rapidly coming around. It is human nature not to compare the ills we know not of with those visible ones by which we find ourselves confronted on every hand.

And when Mary saw the way in which his face was set, she knew, just as well as if he had spoken, that the die was cast. They would go into the wilderness, and hew out a new home *somewhere*. The sturdy spirit of the early pioneers had been fully awakened, and the call of the west could no longer be ignored. Destiny was pushing them on.

CHAPTER VII

INTO THE UNKNOWN LAND

DURING the following two days peace reigned around the humble home of the Armstrongs; but this was partly because no one went into the town again save the father, who came home on the second afternoon leading two horses, at sight of which the boys could hardly repress their shouts of satisfaction.

This told them that the die was indeed cast, for little need they would have of horses, save as beasts of burden in case of migration. Wagons could not be used, so O'Mara had declared, because much of the long journey must be accomplished along those winding buffalo trails that traversed the forest, for of roads there were absolutely none.

It was at this time there arose a necessity for some supplies, and the brothers were told to go into town to obtain the same. Apparently David had succeeded in securing the funds he so badly needed, showing that one staunch friend must have stood by him.

The mother looked wistfully after her boys when they hurried away, filled with new enthusiasm because of the nearness of the time when they would depart from the scene of all their woes.

“I do hope they will restrain themselves, and not get into any trouble,” she said to her husband, who was busily engaged with the horses, a new feature in their experience, and one that gave them much concern.

David smiled back, for it seemed to be his turn to comfort.

“Have no fear of the lads, wife,” he said heartily. “They are good boys, and true, of whom we can well be proud. Sandy is o’er impulsive, it is true; but Robert possesses the balance. We have need to be thankful to Providence that we possess two such sons when about to start upon such a hazardous journey as this.”

An hour or so later Pat O’Mara saw the brothers returning. They carried several packages, which constituted their purchases of necessities, simple though these were. But the sharp eyes of the trapper saw something more which they were carrying. Several scratches marked their faces, and Sandy’s left

optic seemed to be in a degree of mourning, all of which told the astute Irish trapper that there must have been a fracas of some sort. He knew well those signs; and it was with difficulty he managed to conceal the grin that forced itself upon his genial face.

Of course there could be no concealing these evident marks of battle. Nor did the boys attempt to do so.

“ You have been in trouble, son,” said the mother, as she took the package from Sandy, and looked upon the cuts and scratches on his cheek.

It was Bob of course who showed signs of contrition; Sandy, on the other hand, threw his head back, as though proud of his scars. To him every one stood for an honor mark.

“ I could not help it, mother dear,” he said. “ They taunted me, three of them, and began to strike me. Then Bob came, and it was better, though still uneven. But we were furious, and would not give in; would we, Bob? ”

“ Who could have been so cowardly and cruel? ” asked Mary, as she hurried to get warm water in a basin, so that the wounds might be properly bathed, and some homemade liniment put upon them.

“Who but that same bully, Armand Whalen,” Sandy went on, eagerly. “Once before, Bob whipped him until he cried for mercy, and he has never forgiven us. But never mind, mother; we gave the cowards all they deserved. They look much worse than we do; and besides, they ran away in the end. These little cuts are nothing to us. Surely we have had others many times worse.”

“Indeed, I am sorry to have displeased you, mother,” said Bob; “but they were all picking on Sandy, and my blood fairly boiled. Had there been twice as many it could have made no difference. At any rate, they will often think of us when we are gone, which is a satisfaction.”

At which naive remark the mother found herself compelled to smile. She could not be provoked with the boys. And besides, she knew very well what affronts they had continually suffered.

Again she found her eyes drawn irresistibly toward those of her husband. Upon his face was a set look, as though his mind had been made up now beyond recall.

“It is the last straw,” he said, bitterly; “and the end cannot come any too soon now

to please me. I shall be glad when we have wiped the dirt of this place from our shoes. Boys, you did what any manly lad would find himself compelled to do. I am not blaming you one bit. But after this you must remain at home."

"But father, there is news," said Bob, as he suddenly remembered.

"They are coming here then, those brave souls from Carolina, who head toward the setting sun?" asked David, showing the eagerness that possessed his soul.

"Yes," returned the boy; "a messenger has arrived in town from the head man in charge of the expedition, warning all who mean to accompany them that they will arrive in three days, and only stop twenty-four hours. This is the last settlement. When they leave here, it will be to enter the wilderness."

"Glory be!" exclaimed the trapper, upon hearing this. "Then we will soon be on our way, with all our troubles behind."

The good wife sighed. She did not anticipate such glorious things as beckoned the others on. Perhaps she had forebodings in her gentle heart that the new perils all pioneers must face might prove even more formidable

than those they were leaving behind; and that perchance one of her loved ones might find an early grave in that new land, a victim to the treachery of the red men.

But not for worlds would she utter one discouraging word. There seemed no other course open to them; and the women of that day were every one of them heroines, capable of enduring untold suffering in the search of a place they could call home.

Two days afterwards, as promised, the emigrants made their appearance. David had gone out to meet them on one of the horses.

“Fetch them here to camp beside our spring,” his wife had told him; “for we may be the only family meaning to join our fortunes with theirs.”

And sure enough, they camped near the cabin in the clearing, a round three dozen in all, including some five more or less sturdy boys with whom Bob and Sandy fraternized at once.

Then began a period of bustle, as the last preparations were undertaken by the Armstrongs. Some of their things they gave in charge of the one faithful neighbor who had remained true to them through good and evil report. Perhaps at some day an opportunity

might arise whereby these precious, if bulky, heirlooms in the way of furniture could be brought out to their new home. Just now such a thing was not to be considered for a moment.

And then the last morning broke.

The brothers were brimming over with excitement, nor did they feel any particular pain over quitting the place they had for so long called home. It had ceased to have attraction for them since this shadow had fallen; and they believed they would be happy to leave it forever.

David Armstrong, too, managed to conceal what feeling he may have had. But with the little mother it was different. That humble log cabin meant much to her, for inside those stout walls she had spent several fairly happy years; but she put these sad thoughts away with a resolute hand whenever David was near. They would do to dream over when utterly alone, perhaps in the dark watches of the night, in a new country, and amid strangers.

All was bustle and confusion. A few of the town people had come out to see the start of the expedition, and many were the remarks

that were made concerning the possibilities that awaited the daring travellers.

In this hour of parting some of the neighbors, possibly overcome by contrition, tried to make amends for their recent cruel conduct, but David ignored all signs of friendly handshakes, and would have none of them. The iron had eaten too deeply into his soul.

The pack train of horses looked quite formidable when lined up for the start.

“Twelve of them in all!” Sandy sang out, as he stood ready to urge his animal on when the leader gave the order to start.

A hardy gathering of valiant souls the emigrants looked just then. Fortune beckoned to them, and all seemed delightful. If they could only have looked ahead a few months, and seen the terrible dangers that lay in wait, doubtless many a smile would have faded from the faces that now looked so cheerful.

“Hurrah!” shouted the boys, when finally the word passed along the line, and those in the lead began to move.

But there were no cheers. Those grave-faced men realized only too well that in thus putting their fortunes to the touch, by venturing into that unknown world of which so much

had been told, they were carrying not only their own lives, but also those dear to them, in the hollow of their hands.

The caravan moved away amid the sound of many voices, as the boys urged their pack steeds along. Never once did Sandy glance back toward the home he was leaving; he seemed given up entirely to the witchery of the adventure.

But one pair of eyes turned for a last wistful look at the familiar log cabin, with the grand old oak hovering above its humble roof, that had sheltered her little brood so faithfully these years. And then a turn in the trail shut out the view. Mary Armstrong heaved a sigh, and then resolutely strove to think only of what might be in store for them in the new world to which they were journeying.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PERILS OF THE WILDERNESS

“ DID you see that, Bob? ”

Sandy clutched his brother by the arm as he whispered these words, and both of them sank back lower behind the fringe of bushes.

Some weeks had gone by since they had left the old home. By slow degrees the mountains had been surmounted, and they were now nearing the region of the Ohio, on the banks of which the settlers hoped to find homes.

There were eleven men in the party, with seven women, and a round dozen children of varying ages.

Day by day the party of settlers had plodded onward, with their faces ever toward the west. Often they saw the prowling panther near the camp; and it was a common thing to have a deer or a buffalo spring up in advance of the caravan, to go bounding or lumbering away, startled by this first glimpse of white men.

As there was no road it had been utterly impossible to make use of such clumsy vehicles

as the early settlers knew. Upon the backs of the horses was piled all their possessions; and besides, frequently the women and children had to be added to the loads.

The settlers considered themselves fortunate in having with them a man who had gone over this trail before. Pat O'Mara kept at the head of the column throughout each long day.

Many times they had to make detours in order to overcome obstacles in the way that could not be directly overcome. Sometimes these took the form of deep ravines, the banks of which were too steep to allow the horses to obtain a foothold; then again they might be windfalls, where the grand forest trees had been razed, along a track half a mile broad, by some fierce tornado.

When night drew near O'Mara selected some favorable place for a camp which offered opportunities for defence. For they never allowed themselves to fall into a state of security that might induce fatal carelessness.

Some days the settlers made fair progress under favoring conditions; then again they would strike a section of country where every mile had to be won, with patient effort, foot by foot. And they were always vigilant, be-

lieving in that motto of the Puritans: "Trust in the Lord; but *keep your powder dry!*"

Each night, as the cheerful fires crackled, and the women gathered around to prepare the evening meal, the tired men would bring in wood for use while the darkness lasted; and then throw together some sort of defence.

While as yet these preparations had been apparently needless, still the cautious O'Mara warned them that they were now nearing the hunting grounds of the warlike Shawanees; and that any day some party might discover the caravan, and carry the news of their coming to the nearest Indian village.

As yet they had really seen little of the red men. Twice hunters, who were out securing fresh food for the party, had reported catching glimpses of dusky figures darting in and out among the trees; but no attack had as yet been made upon any members of the little expedition.

Bob and his brother were in the habit of going out on alternate days, and looking for game. As this was plentiful they had little trouble in securing a deer whenever the larder got low.

One day they had tramped ahead of the

party, following the old buffalo trail which the horses would take as they came along and which led westward. In this way, if they secured game, it would not be necessary to carry it far in order to join the others.

As yet they had seen nothing worth shooting, when Sandy made the remark with which this chapter begins.

His brother stared in his face, and there was a serious look in his eyes, as he made answer.

“ Yes, I saw it; and I’m afraid it was an Indian, brother.”

“ With feathers in his scalp-lock, which means war! ” continued Sandy, who was always questioning Pat O’Mara, and hence had picked up considerable knowledge concerning the red men and their habits.

Again did the two boys exchange uneasy looks.

“ Do you suppose he is alone? ” whispered Sandy, presently.

“ Let us try to see. Raise your head, inch by inch, until you can look over the tops of these bushes; but be careful,” continued the other.

Back to back they started to do this, intend-

ing to cover the entire surrounding woods with a close scrutiny.

Suddenly there was an odd twanging sound heard. Bob knew instinctively that it was the recoil of a bow-string, and he dragged his brother down instantly.

Then came a heavy thud close by their ears. Looking around, the brothers saw a feathered shaft quivering, with its flint head buried in the trunk of a tree.

It was the first time in all their lives that either of them had been under fire. The mere thought that some human being was endeavoring to do them deadly injury caused a momentary thrill. But, in those early days, boys were made of sterling material; and, after that involuntary shudder, they faced the danger resolutely, with a spirit that would have well become their father.

“ We must get out of here,” whispered Bob, as he prepared to crawl along in the shelter of the bushes.

“ But which way? ” demanded Sandy, confused; for how were they to know just where the unseen enemy might be hidden?

“ That arrow came from yonder; therefore we must turn the other way,” was the convin-

cing argument Bob advanced, and his brother immediately saw the logic of it.

Bob led the retreat, with Sandy trailing close at his heels. Each lad clutched his gun in a nervous grip, and strained his ears to catch the slightest suspicious sound near by.

So they crept on, for ten minutes, without anything happening, and by degrees Sandy felt his courage return. Perhaps, after all, there had only been a single savage; and, again, he may have been as frightened as they were, making off immediately after discharging that lone arrow!

Their hearts still beating faster than was their wont, the boys came to the termination of the line of dense bushes. If they expected to go on from this point they must of necessity change their tactics entirely, and expose themselves to the gaze of any lurker.

“Let’s run for it!” suggested Sandy, at a loss for any other plan.

“No, I have another idea,” returned his resourceful brother.

“Then let us have it, quick, Bob!” whispered the other, to whom inaction was always more or less irksome.

“You start off as though meaning to escape,

dodging this way and that. He will perhaps believe that I was cut down by that hissing arrow. Then, if he shows himself, I can get him, perhaps," Bob ventured.

Sandy fell in with the idea at once, although he realized the danger.

"Give the word, then, Bob, and let me go. Anything is better than this suspense," he said, immediately, starting to get on his feet.

"If you hear me shout, drop flat," the elder brother said, impressively. "That will mean he is trying to shoot at you. And if you hear the report of my gun, seek shelter behind some tree."

The last thing Sandy heard as he gained a half-erect position, and started off on a lope, was the click of Bob's gun-lock as he prepared for business. No doubt the boy's heart was pounding like a hammer as he thus exposed himself to the aim of an enemy; but, nothing daunted, he kept right on, looking to the right and to the left as he scurried along.

And Bob, left behind amid the bushes, lifted his head slowly, so that he could see all that transpired, a grim expression on his young face, such as the stern realities of those early days stamped upon many a boyish countenance.

Ha! There was a movement not far away that his keen ear caught. Not turning his head a particle he twisted his eyes around to the left, and immediately discovered a bent figure that was skulking along, now dodging behind a tree, and anon crouching flat, as Sandy threatened to look around.

It was an Indian, rigged out in all the horrid paint and feathers that marked a Shawanee brave on the warpath. He gripped a short, but stout, bow in his hands; and even as Bob caught sight of him seemed to be fitting a feathered shaft to the tense gut that served as a cord.

Undoubtedly it was his intention to shoot again, and this time, as Sandy's back would be turned, there was a strong probability that the arrow might find a victim.

Bob looked no further; his mind was made up, and, raising his flint-lock musket to his shoulder, he glanced hastily along the barrel.

The red man was in the very act of letting fly his arrow when the bang of the heavily charged musket awoke the echoes of the forest. Sandy had not forgotten his part in the programme, for no sooner did he hear that discharge than he made a quick spring to a neigh-

boring beech tree, back of which he crouched, ready to do his part in the game.

The Indian fell down, but, immediately scrambling to his feet with a whoop, ran off like a frightened deer. He was holding his right arm as he went, from which fact Bob gained the opinion that his hastily sent bullet must have struck that part of the enemy's anatomy.

Then he vanished in the depths of the forest, while Bob reloaded as fast as he could work his hands.

“Are there any more of them?” called Sandy, as he poked his gun out from behind the beech, ready to make use of the same at the slightest provocation.

“I do not think so,” replied Bob, considerably relieved at not discovering a horde of dusky figures rushing toward them, as he had feared would be the case.

Nor did they notice any signs of enemies around them. Sandy insisted upon going over to the spot where the Indian had dropped his bow and arrow, at the time he received Bob's bullet in his arm.

“Some of them might refuse to believe that we had met a real Indian, and got the better

of him," he said, after picking up his trophies; "but these will be the proof."

"Let us go on," observed Bob, who had now finished the labor of recharging his gun.

"Then you do not mean to give up looking for game?" asked Sandy, eagerly.

"Why should we?" observed his brother, sturdily. "That Indian has run off, and we need fear nothing further from him. Perhaps there is no other within miles of this spot, and we need fresh meat very much. If my shot has not frightened everything away, we may get a chance at a deer yet."

"Perhaps a buffalo!" remarked Sandy, with eagerness in his voice; for as yet no one in the company had been successful in shooting a specimen of those huge, shaggy monsters, about which they had heard so much, and whose beaten trails they followed so persistently in making their way.

They kept on, Bob careful all the while to observe the direction they took, for he did not wish to get lost. He was moving up against the wind, so that even the most suspicious game might not scent their presence.

"Look! What is that?" whispered Sandy, as they made their way through a screen of

bushes, and some bulky object was observed trotting along ahead.

“ A buffalo at last! Get ready, and we will fire together! ” said Bob, trying to stifle his excitement as he dropped on one knee, the better to aim his gun.

“ Ready? Shoot! ”

The two reports sounded almost as one.

“ He went down! Oh! we got him! ” shrilled the sanguine one, ready to rush forward.

“ Hold on! ” Bob quickly cried; “ see, you’re mistaken, for he has scrambled to his feet. Wounded as he is, if he sees us there will be trouble. There, he is heading this way, Sandy! Jump for a tree, lad, jump for a tree! ”

CHAPTER IX

ALONG THE BUFFALO TRAIL

SANDY jumped according to orders. With that furious-looking beast coming on the trot, with lowered, massive head, and uttering savage bellows as he advanced, no boy would have hesitated in seeking safety.

Bob swung himself into the lower branches of the tree under which he chanced to be at the time the attack came. On the other hand, Sandy did not understand it in that light. He expected to use the trunk of a beech as a shield, behind which he might find shelter from the bison bull.

Apparently the animal had only sighted Sandy, since he made direct for the tree back of which the boy crouched.

“Look out for him, Sandy!” shouted the occupant of the tree, as he kicked his moccasined feet, and in other ways tried to attract to himself the attention of the infuriated beast.

In this he did not seem to be successful, for the charging bull kept straight on, and came

up against the trunk of Sandy's refuge with a thump that staggered him not a little.

"You see what you get!" called the boy, tauntingly, hovering behind the tree, and ready to glide around it at the first sign of pursuit.

"Take care, he's going to chase after you! Keep close to the tree, and be sure you don't slip!" called Bob; who, his hands trembling with excitement, was trying to get a charge of powder into the barrel of his musket, no easy task while he sat perched on a limb.

Meanwhile there was a scene of action close by. Sandy showed a clean pair of heels to the enemy, slipping adroitly around the beech as fast as the buffalo could chase after him. If he kept his footing all would be well; but, should he ever trip on one of the roots that cropped out of the ground, perhaps the ugly horns of the beast would gore him before he could roll out of reach.

So, while he continued to load his gun, Bob kept up a succession of outcries, intended to encourage his brother, and at the same time disconcert the stubborn bison.

"Keep moving, Sandy! Don't let him get a swipe at you, boy! Oh! I came near drop-

ping that bullet then. Will I ever get this gun loaded? Be careful, lad! That time you were nearly down. He is tiring, Sandy; but unless I make haste something dreadful may happen. I must finish this job. Look out again, he's meaning to turn on you suddenly. There! just what I feared; but you were too quick for him! ”

By this time the boy who was spinning around the tree so rapidly had begun to realize that it was not so much fun, after all, this being pursued by a monster with wicked horns, and the power of a tornado in his thick-set neck. At times he could almost feel the hot breath of the animal upon his neck, which showed how very close the buffalo must be. Had Sandy chanced to be alone his condition must have been doubly desperate. As it was, his only hope seemed to lie in the ability of his brother to get his gun loaded in time to put an end to the crazy bison.

“ Keep it up just ten seconds longer, Sandy, and I'll be ready! The priming, boy, that's all! Now look out, here goes! ”

As Bob said this he discharged his musket, after securing a fair aim, as the animal's flank came around in full view.

“ Hurrah! he’s down again! ” gasped poor Sandy with almost his last breath, for he seemed on the verge of exhaustion from the whirl around that tree.

“ Climb up out of reach, quick! ” shouted Bob, jumping down so as to attract the attention of the bull toward himself should the animal manage to stagger to his legs again, for he saw his brother was exhausted and would now prove an easy victim.

But Sandy was on the ground, and he saw something that his brother did not. The last bullet had reached a vital spot, and already the big animal was quivering in the last expiring throes.

“ Get your gun, and load up as fast as you can! ” said Bob, himself suiting the action to the word.

“ But see, he is dead! ” expostulated the other, pointing to the buffalo, which by now had ceased to struggle and lay quite still.

“ Never mind. Load the gun as fast as you can! ” repeated Bob. “ A hunter with an empty shooting-iron is an easy mark for every prowling redskin. Surely Pat has said that to us many times. And we now know there are Indians around here.”

Thus urged, the younger boy hastened to comply.

“Just to think,” he could not help saying, when this important business had been attended to, and both of the guns were placed in shape for further service, “we’ve actually brought down a big buffalo. And it is the first one shot by any of our party. But all the honor is yours, Bob. If it had been left to me perhaps the old sinner might have got me. I was getting blown to a certainty.”

“But we can share the honor, Sandy; for if you had not kept running round and round as you did, how else could I have shot him?”

That was Bob’s generous way, and Sandy knew it would be utterly useless trying to escape taking half the credit.

“You watch while I use the knife and take off the skin,” Bob went on; for he knew that the hide, if properly cured, would make a valuable robe, to insure warmth when the winter snows came again. “And watch out for Indians,” he added suggestively.

These boys had served their apprenticeship at trapping animals, and there was little in the science of removing and preserving pelts that they did not know. So now, while Bob had

never before seen a dead buffalo, and only had a glimpse of a live one close at hand, he knew just how to go to work.

“Plenty of good meat here for the whole camp,” remarked Sandy, with kindling eyes, as he saw the large buffalo hams exposed by the removal of the hide.

“Yes, and they say it is fine. If it can beat that bear we shot early last winter, before all its fat was gone, I’ll be glad we ran across him,” Bob remarked, as he now prepared to cut the carcass up, so that the best portions might be reserved.

“I wonder when the folks will be along?” said the younger lad, allowing his gaze to travel between the thick trees in that quarter where it might be expected the pack-horses would sooner or later appear.

“Listen!” remarked Bob just then, raising his head, “I thought I heard a shout far away.”

Sandy began to look anxious.

“Oh! I hope nothing has gone wrong,” he observed.

“Nonsense!” expostulated the other, “what could have happened? Just because we saw an Indian, and he tried to put an arrow

in one of us, is no sign of danger to the camp. The only thing that bothers me is that perhaps they have halted far back there for the night. In that event, see where we would have to carry all this meat."

"We might hang it up out of reach of wolves, and bring some of the men, with a horse, to tote it in," suggested Sandy.

"That is so, and a clever idea, too. Wait and see. Perhaps they may come on, and pass near us here," Bob remarked, "for we are close to the trail, which I am sure lies over by that leaning sycamore tree."

So they sat down to wait and listen for more signs.

"This certainly beats our woods back in Virginia," remarked Bob, as he looked around at the great primeval forest that surrounded them, the trees of tremendous girth and beginning to show a new crop of bright green leaves.

"Yes," responded his brother, reflectively, "it is indeed a wonderful country, and, from the signs, just overflowing with game. There was that salt-lick we ran across two days ago; why, from the marks, thousands of deer and buffalo must visit it every year. That very

night we shot three fine stags and a doe, you remember.”

“ Yes, and I was sorry we killed that last one, for she had a little spotted fawn running at her heels, and of course it will die, being left uncared for.”

Bob was a true sportsman. He loved to hunt game, but something within always prevented him from killing more than he could use. And that is ever the mark of one who truly loves Nature. Believing that these good things are provided by an all-wise Creator for the enjoyment of man, they look on it as a sin to waste any such bounties.

“ There, that was a shout, and close by, too. I think it must have been Darby calling to that lazy beast of his, which wants to lie down in every little stream we have to ford. Yes, there he breaks out again,” said Sandy.

“ And from the row that is going on, and the laughing, I fear the beast has done what he’s been threatening to do this long while, and rolled over in a brook. But I can see them now, over yonder,” said Bob, pointing.

Presently the straggling line of pack-horses came along. When the head man saw what a fine supply of meat the two young Nimrods had

awaiting them, he gave the word to pitch camp.

“The afternoon is going, and we could hardly find a better spot than right here,” he observed; at which there was a bustle all around, for camp always meant a period of ease and rest from the weary tramping over rough ground.

“But what is that you are carrying, Sandy?” demanded David Armstrong, as he came along with his two horses, his wife and Kate tramping at their side with the steadiness of squaws, for they had become accustomed to such vigorous and healthy labor.

“An Indian’s bow and arrow which we picked up after Bob shot and wounded the owner, who was trying to get me,” the boy quickly replied.

At the word “Indian” others came to stare at the weapon with curiosity, not unmixed with alarm, for they knew only too well that now they had burned their bridges behind them, for there could be no going back, and every day carried them further and further into the debatable country of the Shawanees, which later on would be known as the “dark and bloody ground.”

CHAPTER X

ATTACKED BY INDIANS

“It looks as if Pat expected trouble to-night, Bob.”

“Well, the men have been holding a council, and father says it is best to be on the safe side; so the guard after this will be doubled.”

The two brothers were sitting on the outskirts of the camp. It did not look like the cheerful spectacle that up to now had marked every stopping place on the journey.

A fire had been made late in the afternoon, and all the cooking done before it grew dark; then the blaze was allowed to die out. This had been done through the advice of the Irish trapper, who knew that the eyes of Indians are especially keen, and that, when darkness came, they could see a light like a camp-fire a long distance off. Even this precaution might not prevent their being attacked before dawn; but it was reducing the chances to a minimum.

From where the brothers sat they could just make out the camp, with the horses quietly

feeding, and the rude shelters erected to protect the women and children from the damp night air. The more hardy men, when not on duty, were accustomed to dropping down anywhere, and going to sleep.

On one side several fallen trees had been formed into a rude sort of rampart, behind which, in a pinch, the members of the expedition might find shelter from plunging arrows, should the worst come.

All these preparations were just what they had been expecting must come sooner or later. Nevertheless, they naturally gave the boys considerable uneasiness, not so much on account of themselves, as because of those loved ones, their mother and Kate.

“There are several scouts out, too, to discover the approach of any hostiles, and bring warning,” remarked Bob.

“Oh! I hope nothing happens,” said Sandy, with a sigh; for, now that they were face to face with the long-anticipated trouble, somehow things looked different from when he surveyed them before leaving that Virginia home in the valley of the Shenandoah.

“Pat says these redskins are not accustomed to the sound of firearms,” the older boy

continued. "Few among them have guns; and those have been sold to them by the treacherous French traders, who are always setting the Indians on the English."

"Just because they want to have a line of trading posts stretching between their possessions up in Canada, and down in Louisiana," remarked Sandy, bitterly; for this was a subject that all the colonists felt deeply; because the French traders lost no opportunity for causing ill blood between the Iroquois, Shawanees, Delawares, Sacs and Pottawatomies on the one side, and the English on the other.

"Yes," replied Bob, "that is supposed to be the reason. Then, again, these Indian tribes see the end of their hunting grounds if the pale-faces keep coming across the mountains year by year, and they will fight. Sooner or later we must encounter them. Father knew it; yes, and that is why mother has that sad look in her eyes."

No longer did the boys belonging to the camp venture upon any of their sports and games while the expedition rested for the night. On other occasions they had wrestled, run races afoot, and engaged in various small rivalries, though there had been no shooting at a mark,

since ammunition was far too valuable to be thus wasted.

To-night they hung around, listening to the subdued talk, and imbued with some of the same spirit that cause the women to huddle together around their little ones and speak in hushed voices.

A silence seemed to be upon the very forest itself, though at this early period in the spring there were usually few birds moving, and animated nature had not as yet wholly issued forth after the winter hibernation, so that this in itself was not so strange.

“ Shall we go in and try to sleep? ” asked Sandy, after two hours had passed with no alarm being given.

“ You might,” returned Bob; “ but I mean to stay up as long as I can.”

“ But, you know, Pat was telling us that these red men of the west usually attack just before dawn, when sleep hangs heaviest and the darkness is strongest! ” remarked Sandy, shrewdly.

“ All very true,” Bob hastened to say; “ but this once they may see fit to change their tactics. Besides, I do not feel at all sleepy. You go in and lie down; but keep your gun close

beside you, and remember what the orders are in case of an alarm.”

“ I have not forgotten. Every man has his position; and, as we can handle a gun, we count for the same. But, if you expect to stay right here, why should I not lie down and sleep under this tree, as well as in there? ”

Bob being unable to advance any plausible reason why this would not answer, the younger boy curled himself up in a knot right there on the bare ground, and inside of five minutes his regular breathing announced that he was asleep.

Sitting there, Bob allowed his thoughts to wander far afield, and of course, in spite of himself, they went back to the home of his childhood, to that familiar old cabin under the wide-spreading oak.

But he had no regrets. The bitterness caused by the unkind conduct of those one-time friends and neighbors still swayed him; and he was glad at the thought of being gone forever from such unhappy surroundings.

What was that? He certainly had heard a sound like some one running; and, even as he started up to listen, a figure brushed past, and went on into the camp!

Bob's heart began to beat more rapidly. He knew that this must be one of the scouts. What news did he bring? Were the Indians about to descend upon them?

"Wake up, Sandy!" he said, as he laid a hand on the sleeping boy.

The other sat up, rubbing his eyes as though hardly understanding where he was; but suddenly he seemed to comprehend.

"What is it, Bob?" he asked, eagerly, "are they coming; and must we fight in the dark?"

"I do not exactly know," returned the other; "only, some one hurried by us, and I think he brings news. Yes, see, the men are quietly rising up all around. The signal must have been given. Come, let us get back into camp before we are cut off by the enemy."

The two boys soon joined the rest, when they learned that the scout had indeed brought startling news. The Indians were coming in force, and advancing secretly to try to take the settlers by surprise. At any minute they might spring up and send a cloud of missiles into the camp.

All preparations as yet undone must now be hurriedly looked after. The women and children were placed behind the shelter of the log

rampart. Each man took the position that had been marked out for him; then, with bated breath, they waited for what was coming.

None would ever forget that night! It was their first real experience with the wily and treacherous red foe, with whom they were fated in after years to become so familiar, and to hate so cordially.

Pat O'Mara was perhaps the only one among them fully acquainted with the tricky ways of the redskins; and he had endeavored to put every man on his guard against being caught unawares. Besides, he had laid out a shrewd plan of campaign, by means of which it was hoped to demoralize the assailants.

After what seemed like an interminable wait there was a sudden shot. One of those on guard had possibly caught sight of an enemy creeping closer to the outskirts of the camp.

It was enough to tell the prowling Indians that their plans were no secret; for immediately the forest resounded with their shrill whoops. They seemed to spring up from every direction. Seeing their numbers in the faint light of the stars, the defenders of the camp might well be excused for feeling new alarm.

Then guns began to sound and to join their

ringing reports with the awful shouts of the enemy. The arrows flew like hail, and lucky the white who had found shelter in time behind some friendly tree.

It was in this exciting moment that Pat O'Mara proved his worth.

Above the dreadful clamor his brave Irish voice rang out, cheering the men on.

“ Hurroo! give it till 'em, me byes! Shoot straight ivery toime, and make each bit av lead count! Remimber the wimmen and childer, it is; and knock ivery head ye say!” he kept shouting, seeming to be everywhere at once.

He had arranged it so that the men fought in couples. While one fired the other was reloading his gun; and thus there was always a detail capable of sending in a volley, should it be desperately needed.

Bob and Sandy crouched low, doing manful work, though filled with unspeakable dread lest the Indians should rush the camp, carrying all before them.

“ Are they retreating, brother? ” asked Sandy at length, after this riot of terrible sounds had been going on for what seemed an age.

“ I think it must be so,” returned Bob,

hardly able to believe the truth himself. “ Their shouts seem to be further away; and the arrows have stopped falling! ”

“ Oh! I wonder what damage has been done, and if — ” But even the stout-hearted Sandy dare not voice the fear that was in his soul, for his thoughts had turned to the beloved father and the two others who crouched back of that poor shelter of logs.

Were any of them injured?

“ Lights! Start the fire, so that we can see what damage has been done! ” called the leader of the emigrant band; and almost like magic tinder was ignited, to be applied to the fires prepared against this time of need.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE BANK OF THE OHIO

“COME with me, Bob!” said the younger boy, unable to undertake the mission alone.

“Courage!” cried the other in his ear; “I am sure all is well, and that I heard Kate’s voice in the song of hallelujah that arose from the women when it was known the Indians had fled. All must be well, brother!”

Yes, all was well; and in another moment the boys were encircled in the loving arms of their anxious mother, while David, bleeding from a slight wound where an arrow had struck him, stood by with thanksgiving written on his bearded face.

If the boys had felt worried about the mother and Kate, fancy her feelings, knowing as she did that her loved ones were on the firing line and taking a thousand risks!

But it was all over now. Pat O’Mara declared that the red men had received a lesson they would not soon forget. Doubtless the valiant little company of home-seekers would

not be troubled again while on the way to the Ohio.

They had not come out of the battle entirely unscathed. True, Heaven had been kind, and no one had been mortally hurt; but there were several suffering grievous wounds, who would have to be tenderly nursed for a time.

“It’s lucky for us,” declared the redoubtable Irish trapper, after the extent of the damage had been discovered, “thot the Shawanees niver poison their war arrows. Troth, but it would be a sorry day for the loike av us if thot same were throe, as I’ve knowed some Injuns to do.” And every poor fellow who had received a more or less painful wound echoed his words.

When the pioneers came to look around in the early morning light, expecting to find many dead Indians, for those guns had poured a hail of bullets directly into the midst of the onrushing foe, to their great surprise they failed to discover a single one. Their dusky comrades must have crept up in the darkness and removed both dead and wounded, fearing lest they fall into the hands of the whites.

It was high noon before the expedition could get started that day, there were so many things

to be done toward repairing damages, attending the wounded, and waiting to hear the report of scouts sent out to learn whether the Indians had really left the vicinity.

Satisfied at length that it would be safe to travel, they made a start. But it might be noticed that from now on there would be no long straggling line of burdened horses, strung out along the buffalo trail. They huddled together in a bunch, and every man clung to his gun constantly, while eyes were kept on the alert for the slightest sign of the cunning enemy.

Several times there were alarms that sent a quiver throughout the entire line. Once a woman discovered a branch moving in a tree, and was sure that their relentless foes must have secreted themselves among the sprouting foliage of the oaks, or amid the dense pines, ready to drop down upon the little caravan as it passed.

Forming in a compact mass, with the horses and women in the centre, and the armed men circling the whole, they waited until Pat O'Mara himself crept forward to investigate. Then it was found that a wildcat had jumped from one branch to another, causing the sway-

ing movement that brought about the alarm.

Altogether it was a day never to be forgotten. When night drew near, the leader, after conferring with the trapper, selected a place for camping which could readily be defended. Half an hour's work among the loose rocks, and the pioneers had constructed quite a fort.

Bob and his brother worked with the rest; but both of them keenly felt this new necessity for being shut up with the others, for they loved dearly to roam.

“To-morrow, if all is well, we must get out ahead again,” said Sandy, as they watched the night shades gather around the new camp.

“Pat says there is little danger,” added Bob, reflectively. “He knows these Indians like a book, and declares that they will not recover from their licking in a hurry. Besides, we need not go far away in order to strike game in this country where it is so plentiful.”

“It looks as if they meant to keep the fires going to-night.”

“Yes, that is to show the enemy that we do not fear them. Pat says you can cow Indians by appearing to have a contempt for them.

Once let them believe you are *afraid* and they will be very brave. Besides, you know we have men out yonder watching. No danger of a surprise to-night. Every trail is guarded.”

“ Well, it looks more cheerful, I must say,” declared Sandy; “ and there is surely something in what Pat says. Who knows the ways of these redskins better than he? Twice has he been with Colonel Boone, far down in the regions of the Kentucky River. I would trust his word in anything.”

“ He seems to be everywhere, and hardly sleeps. But,” and Bob sighed as he spoke, “ I know I shall be glad, for one, when we reach the spot where we mean to make our new home, and can build a cabin to cover the heads of mother and Kate.”

“ Just what I was thinking,” echoed the younger lad. “ After all, there is nothing like home, no matter if it be in Virginia or in the wilderness, so long as *she* is there. But, oh! listen! Is that not the signal agreed upon with the sentinels out in the timber? Can the enemy be coming down on us now? ”

“ Impossible,” said Bob, after listening intently. “ According to all we have ever heard about their ways they do not make an attack

before late in the night, and never at dusk. It must mean something else.”

“ But there it goes again, and closer. One of the men is coming in. Perhaps he does not wish to take chances of being fired upon by some hasty fellow.”

“ Now I hear voices,” declared Bob, raising his hand, “ and some of them do not sound familiar, though they speak good English. Oh! I wonder if it can be — look at Pat hurrying forward, and see how his face is covered with a broad grin! Brother, it must be he recognized a familiar sound in — Look, several men are coming, and they are hunters, too! ”

“ That one in front, Bob, with the bold air — I have not forgotten that Pat told us how one man he knew seemed born to command. Did you ever see a face like that? It is, — it must be Colonel Boone himself! ”

All was now excitement in the emigrant camp. Dogs barked, horses neighed, men shouted, and women laughed; while children added their shrill cries to the general clamor. Just the coming of five men clad in buckskin had caused this uproar; but such men!

“ Come! ” cried Sandy, seizing hold of his brother by the sleeve. “ Let us go forward and

meet them. See, there is father shaking hands with Colonel Boone, just as if he had known him before. And look at Pat dancing around like a crazy man! Did you ever know him to be so happy? Now we shall surely reach the Ohio without being set upon again by the red men."

It was a period of great rejoicing. Daniel Boone (Note 5) and his fellow hunters were once more on their way to the region where the great pioneer had determined to locate his future home, in the heart of the country below the Ohio, and to be known later on as Kentucky.

As the hunters had not supped, the women were soon employed getting them a good meal. Meanwhile the story of the recent fight was told.

But there was little that was new to these readers of Indian signs; for they had passed over the scene of the fight just a few hours back, and, not finding any signs of fresh graves, knew that death could not have visited the pioneers.

Both Bob and Sandy felt proud to shake the hand of the man of whom they had heard so much from the Irish trapper; and, when they

looked into his bold face, with its wonderfully magnetic eyes, they understood how it was that Colonel Boone had such a strange influence with the Indians along the Ohio.

“ He has promised to stay wid us until we reach the river,” said Pat O’Mara, as he joined the Armstrong family a little later, as they were comparing notes.

“ And the others also? ” asked David. “ Daviess, Hardin, Harlan and the young man, Simon Kenton (Note 6), of whom Boone seems to be so fond, will they also remain in our company that long? ”

“ Sure they will,” replied the trapper, quickly, “ an’ only too glad av the chanct. It isn’t often they happens to run acrost white pape in this blissed wilderness. The sight av a lady must be a plisure till men as are exiled from home. Sure they mane to stay by us. And by the same token ’tis little we nade fear from the pesky rid varmints after this.”

It seemed to Sandy that he could not sleep, much as he was in need of rest after the wakefulness of the previous night. He hovered around wherever Colonel Boone chanced to be, listening to his musical voice, and hanging upon his words.

The forest rangers were all dressed pretty much alike, after the custom in vogue at that day. The outside garment was a hunting shirt, or loose open frock, made of tanned deerskins. Leggings of the same material covered the lower limbs, fancifully fringed along the outside seam; the collar, or cape, of the shirt was also fringed. The feet were clad in beaded moccasins, no doubt made in some Indian wigwam.

Each man carried a hatchet or tomahawk suspended from his belt, while a keen-edged hunting knife reposed in a leather sheath. Besides, there were a powder-horn, bullet-pouch, and a little bag containing tinder, flint and steel, and such indispensables as a nomad, wandering day by day through unknown forests, would need for his comfort.

Sandy, even after he was induced to lie under a blanket, kept watching the imposing figure of Boone, as he moved about the camp. It was a plain case of hero worship on the boy's part. He had heard so much about this wonderful man, and now that he had seen him there was not the least disappointment connected with the reality.

Finally Sandy fell asleep, his last thought being a sincere wish that some day he too might

possess a portion of the power over men that was given to Daniel Boone.

It was morning when the boy awoke. There had been no alarm during the night, and Pat O'Mara's prediction concerning the Indians seemed coming true. The defeat they had received at the hands of the whites had cowed them for the time being, though of course no one was so simple as to believe that this state of affairs, however pleasant it might seem, would last long.

An early start was made, for they had high hopes that they might arrive at the bank of the mighty Ohio River before another night.

“If you put your best foot forward,” Boone had told them the previous night, as he conferred with Pat and the leading spirits in the camp, “it may be possible to look upon the Ohio before dark sets in again. Jo Daviess here, who has a better knowledge of distances than the rest of us, since he has been a surveyor, tells me it can be done. And I have never known him to make a mistake.”

That day marked a vast difference in the attitude of the pioneers. No longer did they huddle together like a bunch of scared quail, anticipating trouble from every quarter. The

very presence of those five experienced hunters and Indian fighters seemed a tower of strength to them.

Sandy and his brother took advantage of the opportunity to resume their usual hunting expedition, and managed to bring down a fine five-pronged buck that was a welcome addition to the larder.

It was about four in the afternoon, as told by the sun in the western heavens, for none of them had any other means of ascertaining the flight of time, when, passing through an unusually dense patch of timber, the pioneers came out upon a high bank, and saw a sight that tingled their blood.

Before them flowed a majestic stream, wooded down to the edge of the water, and with the westering sun gilding the little wavelets until they seemed tipped with gold. It was the sublime Ohio, at that time the most beautiful of streams, for its hilly shores were covered with the virgin forest.

Loud rang the cheers from that little band of pioneers.

The Armstrongs' long and arduous journey was at an end. Somewhere along the river they would select the spot upon which to erect

their cabin. The surrounding country fairly teemed with game; and, if the Indians would only leave them in peace, they had reason to believe that in this wilderness they might find the haven for which they sighed when leaving their Virginia home.

CHAPTER XII

BOONE, THE CAPTAIN OF PIONEERS

THAT night the hunters passed again with the settlers. On the following morning it was the intention of Boone and his companions to start further west; for the lure of Kentucky was in his veins, and he felt that no other place could satisfy him, after having once seen that rich soil and hunted in the majestic woods along the Kentucky River.

Before leaving the pioneers the mighty hunter gave them much good advice. He knew of a very desirable plateau just a few miles further west, looking out upon the river, where he himself would locate if he had not already decided on a site on the Kentucky River; and here he hoped they would settle.

Bob and Sandy had decided that they would accompany the hunters a little way when they left. They wished to see as much of them as possible, and, besides, it was down the river the rest would soon be coming, in search of the

spot marked out by the discerning eye of Boone.

“Glad to have your company, lads,” said Daniel Boone, when Bob made the request, “for I have taken much interest in both of you. Friend Armstrong is a lucky man to have his family with him from the start,” and he sighed slightly, for it had been so fated that in much of his pioneer work Boone was compelled to be separated from those he loved.

That was a morning those lads would never forget as long as they lived. Side by side they walked with the man who knew more about Indian craftiness than any other along the entire frontier; and in his own pleasant way Boone gave the boys much valuable advice.

“Always keep a charge in your gun if possible,” he said, “and sleep with one eye open, when you have reason to believe there are Indians around; for, next to a cat, I believe the red varmints to be the trickiest things in all creation. But here we are at the spot I picked out for your settlement. It would not be wise for you to go any further, lads. What do you think of my choice? Do you believe you can make a happy home here?”

When they looked around, and noted the nat-

ural beauty of the location, commanding a fine view of the river as it did, the two boys were loud in its praise.

“ I’m glad you like it,” observed Boone; “ for the first time I struck this place I determined that some day it must be covered with the homes of white men. Once an Indian village stood here, and why they moved away I never learned; but you will find many signs where their lodges stood, and there are burial places back in the hills.”

“ Must you go now, Colonel Boone? ” asked Bob, who felt a sense of keen regret because their pleasant relations must be severed so soon.

“ It is necessary that we lose no more time,” came the reply; “ already I fear that some who await us far beyond may be in difficulties, for the Indians were beginning to grow troublesome at the time I left. But we will come again. Here we shall hope to find a warm welcome when passing back and forth.”

So the boys shook hands with each of the five buckskin-clad rangers. The young man, Simon Kenton, had interested them very much.

“ He has the making of a second Colonel Boone in him,” Bob said, as his eyes followed

the little band of pioneers, walking along in Indian file, with Kenton bringing up the rear; "I wish he would only take a notion to join his fortunes with us here."

Then the figures of the five were hidden in the dense undergrowth. The last they saw of Daniel Boone was when he turned, before plunging into the thicket, to wave a hand to them in good-bye.

"What shall we do now?" asked Sandy, rather gloomily; for somehow he seemed to feel the departure of these valiant frontiersmen keenly, though he had only known them such a brief time.

"Stay around here until our folks come. We promised Colonel Boone not to follow after him, you remember," returned Bob, with whom his word was as good as his bond.

"But that may not be for some hours," protested the impatient Sandy; "because, you know, they were not near ready to start when we left camp; and then they will move much slower than we did, led by men who know every trail."

"But it ought to be enough for us to just sit here and look out on that grand river," remarked Bob, admiration in his eyes, as he

turned them upon the silently flowing stream, still bank-full from the spring rains.

“ It is a fine sight, I’m ready to say,” Sandy admitted; “ and after we get a cabin built we ought to be mighty well contented here, with fish to be had for the taking at the door, and game coming up almost asking to be shot.”

“ Think of the use for our traps back in those wooded hills. Why, I wager we shall lay in a store of pelts the first winter five times as great as ever happened in Virginia. But how glad I am the dreadful journey is done. Kate and mother both stood it better than father expected. How brave they are, and what a blessing it is to have such a mother and sister.”

Bob’s eyes filled while he was speaking; but they were tears of gratitude, not sorrow.

Sitting there, and gazing as if fascinated out upon the broad and majestic stream which from this time on was fated to enter so deeply into their new life, Bob did not notice that his younger brother was wandering around the place. Sandy had always been as curious as any woman, and this propensity had more than a few times brought him face to face with trouble.

It was perhaps half an hour after the five

hunters had left them when Bob suddenly aroused to the fact that for some time he had not heard anything from his brother.

“ I wonder where he can be? ” he said to himself a little anxiously as he scrambled to his feet to glance around. “ Strange that he is not in sight. Perhaps after all he did lie down, and in this warm sunshine has gone to sleep.”

The idea pleased him, and he started to search for some sign of the missing one.

Three minutes, five passed, and still he had not discovered Sandy. He had not as yet called, thinking that there was no need.

“ Perhaps I can track him,” Bob said to himself, as he once more reached the spot where he had been reclining.

It was not very difficult to ascertain where the footprints of his brother made a distinct trail, for, although Sandy wore moccasins, the soil was soft, and he had not been at any pains to hide his tracks.

So Bob moved along, to the right and to the left, just as Sandy had happened to make his way when investigating the site for the proposed settlement. Thus by slow degrees he found himself doubling on their own trail.

At discovering this Bob smiled.

“ I think I can see now,” he remarked. “ While we promised Colonel Boone not to go any further than this, nothing was said about the back country. And Sandy has been unable to resist the temptation to wander around, looking for game. But he could not have found anything worth while, or surely I should have heard a gun-shot. Perhaps I had better give him a hail.”

So saying he raised his hand to his mouth, after a fashion which they had long followed when in the woods, or following their line of traps, and immediately through the woods rang his shout:

“ Ho! Sandy! Hello! ”

To his astonishment a voice immediately answered, and he saw his brother advancing hurriedly toward him. But he carried no game; and no sooner had Bob set eyes upon the other's face than he realized that Sandy brought news of some sort, for he looked excited.

“ What is it, — Indians? ” asked the older boy, involuntarily half raising his musket, and casting an apprehensive glance around at the frowning and mysterious forest by which they were almost entirely surrounded.

But Sandy shook his head in the negative, much to the relief of his brother.

“Then have you found a bear’s den, or perhaps a wolf’s whelps?” he went on.

“You would never guess it in a week, Bob,” declared Sandy, with a smile; “but come with me. I am sure you can do him good, with your knowledge of surgery, which is going to make you a wonderful man some fine day.”

“Surgery! What have you found, Sandy? Is there any one wounded near here?”

Sandy nodded his head.

“Yes, and pretty badly hurt, I fear.”

“Not a white man, surely?” went on the other, falling into step with the impatient one.

“It is an Indian,” replied Sandy, soberly.

“Perhaps one of those who were wounded in the fight. He may have come thus far on his way to his village, and given out,” and now it was Bob who urged the pace, for his professional instinct had been aroused.

True, it was only an Indian who was injured, and in those days the settlers on the frontiers had a very low estimation of the red man as a human being. But then Bob was a boy, and his love for relieving pain amounted almost to a mania with him. Many a time had he set the

broken limb of some little wild animal, across which he had accidentally come in the forest; and his operations had always been very successful; so much so that both father and mother were proud of him.

Sandy had apparently taken particular notice of the place where he had found the injured Indian, for he seemed to experience no trouble in leading the way back there.

“Here he is,” he suddenly remarked, as he swept aside a screen of pawpaws.

Bob looked down upon a painted face, and felt a pair of glittering black eyes fastened intently upon him.

“Why, he is a young fellow, hardly more than a boy,” he remarked in some surprise; but his words must have been understood by the wounded one, for he tried to draw his slender figure up in pride.

“Me brave — me Blue Jacket!” he said, almost fiercely, smiting himself several times on the chest.

The peculiar name caused Bob to notice for the first time that the young Indian was indeed wearing a hunting shirt fancifully decked with the quills of the blue-jay, and from which he doubtless took his name, although in the Indian

tongue it would probably be of an altogether unpronounceable nature.

The Indian did not wholly trust them, it was plain to be seen. Unable to fight, he seemed ready to stoically meet his fate without a whimper, for, perhaps, he fully expected these enemies to knock him on the head, because it was evident from the nature of his wound that he had been in the recent engagement.

“Let me look at your hurt, Blue Jacket,” said Bob, bending down over the recumbent figure.

The other set his teeth hard, but beyond a grunt gave no sign, while the white lad carefully drew away the cloth which was tied about the leg in which a bullet had become imbedded.

In some way the wounded brave must have become separated from his fellows, and, while trying to get to his village alone, had fallen here through weakness caused by the loss of blood.

“He would have been dead by morning if some one had not found him,” declared Bob as he started to cleanse the wound as well as possible just then, meaning to repeat the operation when he could have warm water in plenty.

Those beady eyes followed each gentle ac-

tion with perplexity that gradually grew into confidence. Blue Jacket was learning a new lesson in warfare. His savage conception of how a fallen enemy should be treated had received a rude jolt.

“Here, Sandy,” said the young surgeon, presently, “take hold of his feet, and we will carry him over to where we expect to camp on the site of the coming settlement. The poor fellow shall not die if I can help it. You found him, and he belongs to us. Remember that, if anybody wants to do him an injury. Pat will stand by us, I’m sure; and mother must, for has she not always told us we should do good even to them that persecute us. Now, gently, Sandy. An Indian can suffer, if he does refuse to show it.”

CHAPTER XIII

BLUE JACKET

“ How will this place do? ” asked Bob, coming to a halt, and the boys gently lowered their burden to the ground.

“ Just the place where I'd like to see our cabin raised, with that fine view of the river up and down,” declared the other, enthusiastically.

“ And that is why I chose it,” answered Bob with a smile. “ If we are already at work here, father and mother will naturally come along to us, and the thing is done without any fuss.”

The young Indian had not said a single word since making the assertion that his name was Blue Jacket, and that he was a brave, not a boy.

Those keen black eyes had observed all that the Armstrong lads did with an ever-increasing knowledge of what it meant. There was something in their manner of handling him that

spoke louder than words to the wild heart of this child of the forest; and already he had begun to feel confidence in them.

“Now, start a blaze as soon as you like, Sandy. By the time they get here the fire will be good and hot, so that water will heat in a jiffy.”

They had made the wounded Indian as comfortable as possible; and he lay there, apparently content to watch them work. Possibly he expected that, when the white men, against whom his hand had so recently been raised, should arrive on the scene, his fate must be a matter of minutes; but an Indian never shows emotion, and fear, in his eyes, is the symptom of a coward.

Sandy immediately gathered some wood. He had had long experience in making fires, and gloried in the opportunity to show his skill.

“There, how does that look?” he demanded presently, when, after having used his flint and steel with good results, the flying sparks quickly caught in the dry tinder, and flames began to creep up amidst the gathered wood.

“As fine as the finest,” returned his brother, who knew Sandy’s weakness, and never let a chance to cater to it pass by; “and unless my

ears deceive me I think I heard voices just then up-river."

"You are right, brother," declared the younger lad, pointing; "for there they come, with Pat O'Mara, bless his heart, at the head of the line."

The wounded Indian never even started, and yet a quiver of alarm must certainly have passed through his agonized frame. He simply turned his gaze toward the setting sun, as though, if the worst came, he wished to feast his eyes for the last time on that glorious spectacle. For the clouds floating in space had begun to take on a most gorgeous tint, as though the mysterious unknown country beyond might be putting on a holiday dress to welcome him to the Happy Hunting Grounds of the red man.

Then the long line of horses and pioneers arrived on the spot that had been picked out by Colonel Boone as the prettiest site for a settlement he knew of along the upper Ohio.

Various exclamations of rapture and delight broke forth. The magical beauty of the scene overpowered all alike. Men and women stood there, drinking in the river view as seen in the fading light of the sun; and, when they turned

to exchange sentiments, they were unanimously favorable.

“ It is Paradise ! ” cried one woman, who had suffered greatly during the long pilgrimage across mountains and wilderness.

Pat O'Mara was the happiest of the whole group. He did not expect to put up a cabin home, for his nature compelled him to be a rover; but, since he had guided these pioneers along the way into the Promised Land, naturally he felt elated because they were thrilled and pleased with their new homeland.

And then again, Pat had the greatest admiration for that chief of pioneers, Daniel Boone, who had selected this site as the proper spot for a future white man's town.

“ Now, plase lave all thot till another day,” he called out, presently; “ and pay attintion till the juties av the hour. Sure, they be fires to sthart, fuel to chop, and some protiction to be made aginst an attack av the rids. To worrk thin, iverybody ! ”

Seeing their two boys standing at a certain point, David Armstrong, his good wife, and Kate, leading the two horses, made toward them. From the fact that there was already quite a heap of firewood piled up they took it

for granted that Bob wished them to camp on that particular spot for some reason or other.

Suddenly Kate gave utterance to a bubbling cry of alarm.

“What is it?” demanded her father, startled, since he could only imagine that the young girl might have turned her ankle at just the last stage of their long journey.

“Look behind the boys, father! An Indian!” she exclaimed, pointing a trembling finger toward Bob.

David, too, discovered the form just at that moment, and was also visibly disturbed. But he noticed that both boys were showing not the least sign of any alarm, and from that understood there could be no danger.

Perhaps, also, his renewed confidence arose from the fact that the Indian was lying on his back, and not in the act of creeping forward, as if intent on sinking his tomahawk into the bodies of the lads.

“What is this, Bob, Sandy?” he asked, as he stood over the form of the Shawanee, who met his gaze without a flicker of emotion.

“We found the poor fellow near by, father. He is wounded, and was slowly bleeding to

death," said Bob hastily, and not a little anxiously.

"And Bob couldn't keep from helping him; you know his failing, father. What we want now is a kettle in which to heat some water," remarked Sandy, making a movement to secure the implement he had in mind, and which, in company with other cooking utensils, dangled from the back of the leading horse.

"Stop! what is this you mean to do?" asked David Armstrong uneasily.

"Save the poor fellow's life, perhaps. He has an even chance if I can cleanse that ugly wound," replied Bob, meeting his father's eye steadily.

"But he must have been one of those savages who tried to rush our camp night before last; the wound is from one of our own bullets!" David went on, shaking his head, as though he did not wholly believe it right they should nurse a viper only to have him sting them.

Bob looked appealingly at his mother. Well he knew where to go for backing in a case like this; nor did he make any mistake.

"David, for shame! Would you let the poor boy die, even though his skin be different from

ours? Do we learn this in the Good Book? Is it not written that we bind up the hurts of our enemies, and thus cover their heads with ashes of reproach? What if it were one of our dear lads, in an Indian village — would you wish him to be treated like a dog? We have come here to live, and it becomes us to set a Christian example to these poor heathen.”

David Armstrong was far from being a hard man at heart. Like most of the early pioneers he had imbibed strong ideas concerning the heroic measures necessary to hold their own against the grievous perils that menaced them on every side. And, doubtless, he, in common with most of the men in the ranks of those who invaded the wilderness, believed that the “only good Indian was a dead Indian.” But, as always, he was dominated by the sweet influence of his gentle wife.

“Boys, your mother knows best,” he said, presently; “and it is better that you take pattern from her, than follow in my footsteps. Do what you think is right, and we will hope no evil follows.”

Of course the young Indian had listened to all this talk closely. He might not understand what sentiment influenced the wife and mother;

but he could see the noble pity that shone in her eyes as she bent above him.

Still, not by the slightest expression did he betray any satisfaction that may have passed through his heart at the knowledge that he was not to be ruthlessly put to death as he had anticipated. That would have ill become a warrior, which, boy though he seemed to be, he had so proudly proclaimed himself.

Meanwhile Sandy made his way down to the edge of the flowing river and filled his kettle with water which he placed upon the stones composing the rude but effective fireplace. It would only take five or ten minutes to heat this sufficiently for the purpose of the amateur surgeon.

David busied himself relieving the animals of their several loads, in which both Bob and Kate assisted. Rude shelters in the shape of tents would have to serve them for the present, until cabins could be provided; but, ere another sun set, the chances were that several houses would be started, for these pioneers were quick workers, once they set their shoulders to anything.

Bob knew that no time should be lost in washing that inflamed wound, and applying some of

the wholesome soothing lotion which his mother prided herself in making. Well he knew its wonderful properties in a case of this kind, and he believed that it would allay the dangerous stage of that injury as nothing else might, hence his desire to make haste in applying it. The others could in the meantime be erecting the tent and gathering their scanty household goods under its friendly shelter.

When he found the water warm enough for his purpose he went to work. Most of the pioneers were too busily engaged just then in settling on locations for the night to bother hanging around to see what occupied the attention of the Armstrong lads; but, of course, the smaller children quickly discovered the presence of a real Indian in the camp, and the news speedily circulated around.

Pat O'Mara himself came over to assist his particular friends, and when he saw what task was being done his eyes opened round with wonder.

“ Begorra! an' is it a horsepital ye've sthartered already, Bob? ” he asked, as he leaned over to look, and then started at seeing a copper-colored face with a pair of snapping black eyes fastened defiantly on his own counte-

nance. "Phat! a ridskin it is ye are afther havin' here? Sure, it's the first toime I iver saw a white lad nurse a sick Injun bye!"

When the prospect of death itself could not induce the Shawanee to show signs of emotion, this likening him to a youth, as in the previous instance, seemed to arouse him. An Indian hates above all things to be called a squaw or a child. He sat up, despite the restraining hand of Bob, and smote himself proudly on the chest, once again exclaiming angrily:

"Blue Jacket, him no boy — warrior — big brave, ugh!"

"Well," remarked Pat with a quizzical smile, "I reckons as how what ye sez is all quite throe, Blue Jacket. And if so be this foine lad chooses to coddle yees back to loife agin, phat business is it av ours? On'y it sames till me 'tis a great waste av toime an' liniment. But, Bob, look out ye don't lose yer patient, lad."

"Lose him, Pat?" echoed the other, pausing in the act of binding up the limb, after having used the precious, magical ointment given to him by his mother. "What can you mean? I

feel sure he'll come around all right. He's young, and with good blood in his veins. Surely the chances are ten to one — ”

Bob stopped right there. Suddenly he comprehended what the kindly Irish trapper meant, when he spoke in that way. Following the meaning look of the other he saw that a man was hurriedly approaching them. He carried a gun in his hand, and there was an ugly expression on his bearded face.

This man was a pioneer named Brady. He had come from the section of Carolina where the Boone family had lived, and was meaning to hew himself a new home in the great western wilderness.

Anthony Brady was the father of a family, and a fair sample of the early pioneer, but he hated Indians above all living things, looking upon them as only fit to be shot and hewed down whenever possible.

Bob knew that Anthony had had a brother dangerously wounded in that warm engagement when the Shawanees attempted to carry the camp. This must have aggravated Brady's already bitter feeling for the red men, and, hearing that the Armstrong boys were meaning to nurse one of the wounded foemen back to

life, he was filled with rage that such a thing should ever be allowed.

And Bob felt that Blue Jacket was in more peril right then than when he lay on the ground, weakened by his wound, and left to perish.

CHAPTER XIV

A NEW HOME IN THE WILDERNESS

“ SANDY! ”

The younger lad heard his name called and, looking up, caught the beckoning finger of his brother. One look told him what was threatening, for the face of the advancing settler betrayed the ugly thoughts that filled his mind.

Sandy immediately sprang over to join forces with his brother, for whatever Bob did was right, in his mind, and he stood ready to back him up to the end.

“ What does all this foolishness mean? ” demanded the tall pioneer as he came to where Bob was still kneeling beside his patient, with the bandage just secured by a strip of narrow linen which his mother was never without, since every housewife in those days had to be ready for emergencies.

Bob did not answer. He waited until Mr. Brady saw the young Indian, who met the angry glare in the settler's eyes with a defiant look. Blue Jacket even hastened to sit up, and

fold his sinewy arms across his chest. It was the attitude which he conceived a true warrior ought to assume when ready to chant his death song, and laugh at Fate.

“An Injun!” roared the furious man, making a threatening movement with his long musket. “They told me so, but I couldn’t hardly believe it. A red viper in our camp, to be nursed back to life so that he can bring his fellows down on us some fine night, and scalp the whole company. We’ll soon settle that!”

“Hold on, Mr. Brady,” said Bob calmly. “What do you mean to do?”

He had placed himself in front of the wounded Indian, shielding his painted body with his own. Sandy stood close at hand, ready to clutch the arm of the infuriated man should he dare venture to extremes. And Mr. Armstrong came hurrying up, urged on by his alarmed wife.

“Shoot the snake as he deserves, if you must know!” shouted the man, who had worked himself up into a condition bordering on hysteria. “Who knows but what it was him that wounded my poor brother, Caleb! One Injun more or less can never matter much, anyway. So stand

aside, Bob Armstrong, and let me put him out of his misery, like you would a mad dog.”

But he greatly mistook the temper of Bob, if he thought that threats like this could have any influence over him. On the contrary the young pioneer only spread himself more squarely in front of his helpless charge.

“No, you shall not hurt him, Mr. Brady. Sandy and I found him, and he belongs to us. Pat O’Mara is still in charge of this company, and he has told us we could do what we wanted with him. Besides, he is only one lone Indian, and can do us no harm. Perhaps, if we help him now, he may not forget it some time in the future. For we are come here to stay always, and his people belong here.”

The man dared not attempt to fire while Bob thus interposed his body between; besides, he had a healthy respect for the redoubtable Irish trapper.

“Is that true, O’Mara?” he demanded. “Have you given these foolish lads permission to keep this varmint alive when he’s better off if dispatched?”

“’Tis a fact that they prejudiced me in favor av thot same ijee, aven though I was opposed to the same in the sthart,” responded the genial

Pat, winking at Sandy while he spoke. "And p'raps it's best thot ye do be mindin' yer own business, Mr. Brady, meanin' no offence at all."

"And," said David, laying a heavy hand on the other's shoulder, "they have the approval of both their mother and myself, Brady, so please pay no more attention to what we are doing here. The redskin will be able to travel in a few days. Perhaps he may take a message to his people from us, and be the means of bringing about a lasting truce — who knows? At all events he is going to be doctored by Robert, and no one will lay a finger on him without accounting to me!"

Anthony Brady was no fool, though doubtless a most impulsive man. He knew that the conditions were most unfavorable for a continuance of the argument, so, shrugging his broad shoulders, and with a last scowl at the impassive face of the young Shawanee brave, he turned on his heel in disgust.

"Well, have your way, Armstrong," he said, moodily. "But, if I happen to run across this young savage in the forest, he will never return to his people to tattle about our weakness."

"And if you attempt any treachery, Brady,

you will answer to me for it, remember," declared David, sternly.

"An' to me, by the pipers!" echoed O'Mara, shaking his head aggressively.

"Have no fear as long as he is in your charge, neighbor, for I am not the man to stir up strife over one wretched Injun; but, after he *leaves* you the case is different, and he can be safely potted by any white with a ready gun," and with this dark threat Brady stalked away.

And the one who had been the cause for all this excitement did not utter a single word to show that he understood what a world of gratitude he owed to the two boys. But there was a look of intelligence in his face. He understood, and would not forget.

The night was now gathering around them. Fires had been started, and every soul in the new settlement seemed to be busily engaged.

Already had the Armstrong tent been raised, and things were assuming rather a cheery look around them. And, while they worked, many times did the eyes of those pioneers wander down to the placid surface of that broad and swift river, concerning which they had heard such extravagant tales.

Supper was presently ready. It consisted of the simplest of fare, for luxuries were utterly unknown among these early settlers along the Ohio; but there was plenty and to spare, and their good wives knew how to cook it in an appetizing manner.

Nor was the young Indian forgotten. He sat up and ate in silence. Not one word did he speak to express any gratitude, save when he was through, and ready to lie back again, at which time he gave a grunt, and remarked:

“ Ugh! good! ”

“ I guess he doesn't know much English,” observed Sandy, chuckling.

“ That may be,” replied his brother; “ but I've heard Pat say that these Indians never tell what they think. I reckon he *feels* it all right, for I can see something in those snapping black eyes of his that tells me so every time he looks at either of us.”

“ Yes, and you in particular, Bob,” declared Sandy; “ because he just can't understand why you treat him so fine, when he expected to be knocked on the head, like we do a lynx or a fox we find in our traps.”

The customary precautions were taken that night to guard against a surprise. The gloomy

mysterious forest surrounded them on every side save the river, and who could say what terrible perils it concealed? Here roved fierce beasts of prey, the bear, the panther, and the wolf, besides possibly other species of animals the nature of which they did not know.

But still more to be feared ten times over were those dusky hordes of savages, whose country they had invaded, if not with hostile intent, at least meaning to take it for the use of the white man.

But there was no night alarm. Doubtless more than one among the women trembled as she lay awake during that first night on the bank of the Ohio, and listened to various sounds from the forest that might not be familiar to her ears, and which her fears magnified into signals exchanged between different parties of prowling Indians waiting for a chance to attack the intruders.

But morning dawned, bright and rosy, and all was well.

Bob had slept close to where his patient lay on a spare blanket. He entertained some anxiety lest Brady, or another of the same stripe, might deem it a duty to creep up in the darkness and finish the wounded Indian. Perhaps

he did the man an injustice in suspecting anything of the sort; but Bob had inherited his forefathers' Scotch caution.

All was soon animation. While the women prepared breakfast the hardy men selected the sites upon which they expected to begin erecting their future cabin homes.

The Armstrongs were able to retain possession of the spot which had so pleased the boys, and David had even marked the dimensions of his new home upon the rich soil; after which he took his axe and started to hew down a tree that interfered with the raising of the cabin.

Every soul in camp had plenty to do that wonderful day. The men worked early and late, assisting each other with the heavier labor of lifting the logs, after they had been properly hewn to fit. Even Pat swung a spare blade with more or less skill, for he intended to stay about until he had seen his good friends snugly installed in their new home.

The wounded Indian seemed to be getting along splendidly. His was a tough constitution, and able to withstand a shock that would have easily been fatal to one less accustomed to privations and hardships.

He passed a few words with Bob now, though

his accomplishments in the line of English seemed limited. Indeed, it was a mystery where he had ever picked up what he did know; though later on Bob discovered that there had been a white woman taken prisoner by his tribe a year or two previous, and that before she died from some fever she had taken especial interest in young Blue Jacket, for some reason or other, teaching him many things.

When again night closed around the new settlement there were a dozen cabins in process of being erected. If the good work kept up, more than one might have a roof completed by another sunset.

A feeling of contentment reigned. Every one seemed delighted with the location, and expressed a feeling of gratitude toward Colonel Boone, in that he had guided them to this place, rather than allowed them to settle elsewhere further up the river.

And, when another day was spent, the Armstrong cabin was among the three that had the roof completed, so that they could actually move their belongings inside, and feel as though their period of pilgrimage were at an end, since once more they had a place to call home.

Trust that wife and mother to quickly add

the delicate little touches that would give it the familiar air to which all of them were accustomed. It was commodious enough to allow of the wounded Indian's being carried within, which task was performed by the two boys, assisted by David himself; and the little mother superintended the job of making him comfortable.

He was improving rapidly, and Bob knew that it would not be many days before his patient would be able to walk, for the wound had started to heal in a magical way.

Though Blue Jacket said little, he watched all the while. Not a thing went on but that those beady black eyes saw it.

"I wonder what he thinks of it all," Mrs. Armstrong said several times, as she noticed how he followed her around with his gaze, while she was engaged in some of her household duties.

"I only hope he appreciates what you are doing for him enough not to bring any of his friends down on us some fine night," said David, who was only half reconciled to this state of affairs, and had little use for the copper-colored sons of the wilderness.

As the days passed on, and there was no

alarm of any kind, the new settlers found reason to hope that the Indians, having been taught a severe lesson in that battle of the night, meant to leave them alone.

“Niver belave thot,” said the wise O’Mara, when he heard this opinion expressed, “they do be the most treacherous av varmint. ’Tis the lot av thim wud lull yees to slape, an’ then take yees be surprise. Watch always, me friends! Kape wun eye open whin yees slape! An’ niver, niver go away from home widout a gun an’ plenty av powder an’ ball. Faith, I wudn’t giv sixpence for the life av the man as niglected the proper precautions whin dalin’ wid ridskins.”

More than a whole week had now gone since the little company of daring souls came to a halt in this chosen spot; and then, one morning, there fell in the midst of the Armstrong family an unexpected shock that took every one by surprise.

CHAPTER XV

THE SUDDEN PERIL

“ OH! he’s gone! ”

Bob uttered these words one morning just after daybreak. Being the first to awaken, he had thought to start the fire so that his mother might prepare an early breakfast, since all of them were so full of business.

For he and Sandy had planned to go into the woods that day, hoping to secure a deer, since the stock of provisions was growing low.

“ What ails you, Bob? ” grunted Sandy, as he sat up on his blanket and dug his knuckles into a pair of heavy eyes.

“ Blue Jacket — he’s disappeared! ” exclaimed the other, still looking as though he could not just grasp the fact that was so apparent.

Whereupon Sandy sprang up and stared at the corner where the wounded Indian had been accustomed to lying. The blanket was there, but no Blue Jacket!

“ What can have happened to him, Bob? ”

exclaimed the younger boy, staring at his brother. "You don't think that ugly Anthony Brady did it? Oh! he surely could not have dragged him away to do him harm?"

"Well, hardly," said the wiser Bob, with a negative shake of the head; "because you see, Sandy, I was sleeping not five feet away from him all night, and you know I am not a hard sleeper. They couldn't have dragged him away and I not know it."

"But what do you think happened?" queried the puzzled Sandy.

"Blue Jacket crept away while we slept. He believed he was well enough to make the journey to his village home," Bob went on saying, just as though he understood it all perfectly now.

"And without saying good-bye to any of us? Did you ever hear of such ingratitude?" exclaimed the other, throwing up both hands in disgust.

"Wait. You do not know. Pat is still in the settlement, and we can ask him what he thinks about it. Anyhow, Indians are queer fish. They never do things the same way we do;" and Bob smiled at the angry look on his brother's face.

“ But if he wanted to go home why didn't he tell us, and say good-bye in the right sort of way, instead of sneaking off like a sly mink? ” Sandy kept on saying.

“ Listen, and I'll tell you what I think. You know what Mr. Brady said about his meaning to shoot an Indian every time he saw one in the woods? Blue Jacket heard that, and he must have understood what it meant.”

“ Of course he did, for I saw him watching Mr. Brady,” Sandy admitted.

“ Well,” said Bob, “ you see, he believed that man was on the watch for the time he would leave us. Now you and I understand Brady has changed his mind a little about all Indians being bad. But Blue Jacket didn't know that. No doubt he suspected that, if he went away in the daytime, some one would slip after him and lay him low. And so he determined to go while we were asleep. What do you think of my guess now, Sandy? ”

“ It sounds all right,” declared Sandy, enthusiastically; “ yes, I'd wager a shilling that you have struck the truth, Bob. It takes you to see through things. But here is father; let us put it up to him.”

Mr. Armstrong, upon hearing what had hap-

pened, immediately declared that the young Shawanee must have considered it the part of wisdom to slip away unnoticed while the settlement was wrapped in peaceful slumber.

“Go out and ask the sentinels whether any of them saw him,” he said to the two boys; “but I wager you will find that nobody knows the first thing about him.”

This proved to be the case, for, although the young pioneers made the rounds of the men who had been on guard duty during the entire night, in no quarter could they learn that a single flitting figure had really been seen.

One man had believed he saw something, but reached the conclusion, after an investigation, that it had only been a prowling raccoon or an opossum, both of which animals were to be found in plenty near the new settlement.

On the way back they ran across the genial Irish trapper. He was oiling some of his traps, as though ready to put them away until another season.

“The ridskin gone, is it, me byes?” he observed, after Sandy had told him why they were going around asking questions. “Well, upon me honor I’m not wan bit surprised, knowin’ the sly ways av the animal so well. But, by yer

lave, I'll go wid yees till the home, an' say if the ungrateful skunk had the good manners to lave a sign to till what he thought."

So it was Pat's eyes that discovered something fastened to a crevice between two of the logs, as yet unfilled by mud. It seemed to be a bit of inner bark which Blue Jacket must have obtained possession of recently, after he was able to limp around the interior of the new cabin, and even venture outside a little way.

Upon this he had scratched various rude signs. To the ignorant boys they looked like the crude work of a little child attempting to draw a pig, and some other domestic animals; but with Pat O'Mara it was different. Every little mark had a meaning of its own in his experienced eyes, for he had seen much of this Indian picture writing.

"Sure, 'tis just what I thought, byes," he declared, as he scanned this piece of bark with its cipher message. "He knowed wan av us min would be able to rade this missage."

"But what does it say, Pat?" demanded the impatient Sandy.

"In so many worrds thin," began the other, wrinkling his brows, "that he will niver, niver forgit what yees have done for him; and that

some day perhaps he may have a chanct to repay ye for it all. Begorra, afther all the rid sarpint did have some falin' in him! I takes back all I iver sed aginst the lad. Who knows but thot this may be the interin' wedge whereby we may make a treaty av pace wid the bloody Injuns? "

Both boys were sorry that Blue Jacket was gone. Bob in particular had begun to feel quite drawn to the young Indian. Of late they had spent considerable time trying to converse. The Shawanee had told him more or less about his tribe, and in turn had learned that the motives of the invading whites were not at all warlike, if they were only let alone.

The axes sounded through the livelong day, as the settlers continued to clear away the woods which shut them in so closely. The further the fringe of nearest trees could be moved back, the freer would they breathe; for it seemed as though enemies must ever be lurking in the gloomy depths of the dense forest.

Fish were taken from the river with the utmost ease, and furnished many a fine meal, though many of them were of a species utterly unknown to any of the settlers. Blue Jacket

had said they were good to eat, however, and so they had been found on testing them.

The cabins continued to arise, as it were, in a night. In this duty the new settlers always assisted one another when the time came for the log raising, since what was the interest of one must ever be the interest of all.

As fast as the trees were cut down, the virgin soil was turned over, rich as it was in valuable leaf mold, and some of the seeds, so carefully hoarded during the long journey from their Virginia starting place, were planted.

It was wonderful what rapid changes took place in that favored spot. Every sunset saw new cabins being topped with such rude shingles as the newcomers could hew from the timber which was so plentiful. No sooner was a cabin finished than the fortunate family would move in. Little they cared that there was not a piece of furniture awaiting them; and that tables and seats would all have to be made. A sound roof over their heads in case of storm was the main thing; besides, no doubt the women naturally felt safer behind stout walls, rather than settled in tents, or make-shift shelters of branches. They could not easily forget the terrors of that awful night when the In-

dians had attacked the camp, and looked eagerly forward to the day when the entire settlement might have a strong blockhouse where all could find safety in case of sudden need.

Then, by degrees, came the work of making things more comfortable for the women. Nearly every man could use fairly well the primitive tools of the day; and where this skill were lacking he might exchange his abilities in some other line with a more accomplished neighbor, so that the necessary deal table, and the benches, as well as bunks, or rude beds, for sleeping, were secured.

Certain of the members of the little community were given other tasks. Food had to be secured, and fortunately there was no lack, with the adjacent river to supply plenty of fresh fish for the taking, and the bountiful store of game awaiting the coming of the marksman.

Thus, in a very brief space of time, things began to take on a homelike appearance. Outdoor cooking might still be indulged in to a great extent; but there would also be times when the tempting venison roast would again be made ready for the table by the turning of the familiar spit over a fire of red ashes on the big hearth.

These hardy pioneers seldom had need of medicine, such was their active life, and plain wholesome fare; nevertheless, every family always kept a store of certain dried herbs used for fevers and other ailments. As a rule accidents alone required medical care; but there was always some woman in a settlement more highly favored than her companions in knowledge of nursing; and to her they looked in times of need.

Many of their cooking utensils they made themselves out of clay, which was baked after a rude fashion, just as the Indians did. These vessels, while not very fine looking, answered most admirably the purposes to which they were put, and many of them have been handed down to the descendants of these early Ohio settlers, to be treasured with due reverence.

Salt they could obtain readily enough. In Kentucky and Ohio in these days there were what were called "salt licks," because deer and buffalo frequented the places in order to gratify their longing for this almost indispensable commodity. Here they were able to secure with little effort whatever quantity of salt was needed.

Bob and Sandy were always on the lookout

for such "licks." They knew from Daniel Boone and O'Mara that, whenever they wanted deer, it was simplest to hide close to one of these salt licks, and wait until buck or doe came to gratify its craving; when they could usually secure their game by a single shot.

It might seem rather hard that the poor deer should be taken advantage of in this way; but these men of the border looked upon the stocking of the limitless forest with various kinds of game as a wise provision of Nature, intended primarily for their good while peopling the land, and extending civilization westward toward that wonderful river of which they never tired of talking, the Mississippi.

David Armstrong had considered the situation carefully before starting from Virginia on this long journey. He also talked it over with Pat O'Mara. Consequently he had utilized every bit of money he could lay hands on to purchase certain articles which the Irish trapper assured him could be traded to the friendly Indians for their precious pelts of mink, fox, beaver, bear and other kinds of wild animals.

The French traders had, up to now, monopolized this business along the frontier all the way from the great inland seas, of which so

little was known, down to the great province of Louisiana on the Gulf. They understood that their day would soon be brought to an end once the English invaded this vast territory; and consequently they were forever endeavoring to arouse the savages against Daniel Boone and those other hardy spirits who meant to chop out trails through the new country, and found a race of English-speaking settlers.

Mr. Armstrong intended to become a trader. In this way he believed he might earn enough to support his little family; especially since he had two such industrious boys, who could do so much to help out by bringing in game in season, tilling the little garden around the new home, and making good use of the few rusty and cumbersome traps they had brought all the way from Virginia.

In their hunts the boys had already learned that there was an apparently endless supply of small fur-bearing animals among the valleys within ten miles of their new home.

“Just think what great times we can have next winter,” said Sandy, as they prepared for another jaunt into the timber, and this subject was brought up by the sight of Pat’s rusty traps hanging from a peg on the side of the

inner wall; for Pat was now ready to take one of his periodical lonely trips deeper into the unknown region further down the great river.

Just then the Irish trapper himself came out from the inner room, where he had been saying good-bye to their mother.

“ Sure it’s off I am, me byes,” he observed, as he held out a hand to each, while his humorous blue eyes twinkled as he strove to keep back the tear which tried desperately to break loose. “ Take good care av yersilves, now. And whist, lads; until the spring rains do be comin’ to wit down the dead laves in the forest, it wud pay yees to be careful how ye set a fire goin’. Wanst caught in a forest fire was enough for me, thank ye.”

“ Why, of course we will, Pat,” said Bob, shaking the honest hand of the trapper warmly; “ and we all hope you will be back this way before long.”

“ And if you run across Colonel Boone,” remarked Sandy, “ as I reckon you mean to, tell him how glad we are to be here.”

To all of which Pat promised faithfully; after which he shouldered his long barrelled rifle, gave a hitch to his leather trousers, waved his hand to Kate, who was looking out of the

window, her pretty face bedewed with tears, and then, whistling merrily to hide his own emotion, he strode away.

A minute later he waved to them from the border of the dense woods; then he was gone, and no one could say whether they would ever again look upon the genial face of the happy Irish trapper. For his life was one constant succession of perilous adventures amidst wild beasts and even wilder human beings, so that he actually held his existence in the hollow of his hand.

“Come on, let us make a start,” said Sandy, as impatient as ever.

Presently the two lads found themselves tramping along through the woods, on the alert for any game worth wasting precious powder and lead upon.

It had been quite mild of late, but to-day the wind had veered back into the old quarter where the ice king dwelt, and was growing stronger all the time. To the young hunters, however, the air was only invigorating, and gave tone to their efforts.

“Queer that we have seen nothing worth shooting up to now,” remarked Sandy, after they had been tramping a full hour. “What

do you think is the matter, Bob? Can the Indians be about, and have they frightened all the deer and buffalo away? ”

Bob shook his head.

“ I was just wondering,” he said, “ if we made too much noise stalking through all these dead leaves. Did you ever see such a thick mass? And as dry as tinder, too. See, when the wind catches them up, how they whirl like mad.”

“ Goodness! ” remarked Sandy, remembering the caution of the trapper; “ wouldn't it just be awful if they caught fire? We must be miles away from home, and could never reach it. What in the world would we do, Bob? ”

Then, as he glanced up at his brother when asking this question, he discovered that Bob was standing there, sniffing the air suspiciously! In the present excited condition of Sandy's nerves that, of course, was enough to set him wild.

“ What is it? You smell something — oh! Bob, please don't tell me that it is smoke! ” he exclaimed, his voice trembling with sudden alarm.

“ That is just what I do smell,” replied Bob, uneasily, though, seeing the distress of his

brother, he immediately tried to laugh it off. "But perhaps it comes from some campfire started by the Indians. How do we know but what we may be close to a village, since no one has ever come this way before?"

"Now I get it," cried Sandy, "and, Bob, listen, what can that roaring sound mean? Are we near the river, and is that a rapids of any sort?"

In spite of his bravery, and his desire not to frighten Sandy, Bob felt that his face turned pale, for he knew instinctively what that strange sound meant.

"Come, perhaps we had better turn around, and walk this way," he said, suiting his action to the words.

"You know something, and you're trying to keep it from me, brother. That isn't fair. Tell me the worst, Bob! That rushing sound up on the wind — *does that mean the woods are on fire?*"

"That is just what it means, Sandy," said the other, "and we must run like mad now!"

CHAPTER XVI

CHASED BY THE FLAMES

“ BUT this way is not the way home, Bob! ” expostulated the younger lad, even as he clung close to the flying feet of his brother.

“ True, ” Bob flung over his shoulder, while he ran on; “ but it is away from the fire, and that must be enough for us now. Can you go any faster, Sandy? ”

“ I know what it is! ” cried the other, his voice trembling under the great strain; “ you mean that the noise is getting louder all the while! Then the fire must be gaining on us! We will be caught! ”

“ Oh! I do not say that, ” and Bob fell back a trifle so as to run alongside his companion; “ but it is certainly advancing very fast and furiously. This wild wind whips it along much quicker than any man can run. ”

“ Look! ” cried Sandy, suddenly, “ what is that over yonder? Surely it is a buffalo — two, three of them! And see how they gallop along,

with their heads lowered, and the hot steam pouring from their nostrils! ”

“ They smell the smoke and hear the noise, ” Bob replied, speaking in jerks as he ran. “ Perhaps they may never have seen a fire before, but they know what it means. And there goes a stag! Look at the tremendous leaps he is taking! No danger of his being caught by the flames! ”

“ Don't I wish we could run as fast! What a pair of horns for this time of year! ” said Sandy, who knew that it was the season when stags lose their antlers, to be replaced with a new pair.

“ Too bad we could not get one of those buffalo, ” observed Bob; “ but it would be wicked to kill the poor beast when we could never save the meat. Let them live to another day. ”

“ Yes, we have all we want to do now, trying to save ourselves, ” panted Sandy, who was not his brother's equal in running, and was already beginning to show evident signs of exhaustion.

Bob noticed this with increasing uneasiness.

“ We can never get away by running, ” he declared, as he shortened his pace; and Sandy hastened to do likewise, with evident relief.

“ Would it do to climb high up in a tree? ” the latter hazarded at a venture.

“ Not at all, for we should be smothered with the smoke, even if we managed to keep from being cured like bacon. But I was thinking that if only we could run across a hollow tree we might find refuge in it,” said Bob, looking eagerly to the right and left.

Already the smoke, driven ahead of the flames, was beginning to make objects indistinct around them. It burned their eyes, and caused a shortness of breath that was a sample of what it might be when the full force of the forest fire swept down upon them.

“ But suppose the tree caught fire, and burned,” said Sandy, in bewilderment; “ how could we save ourselves then? ”

“ You don’t understand, Sandy,” returned the other, quickly. “ The trees will hardly burn at this season of the year, being full of sap. This fire is made up of all the dead leaves and ground stuff. It is fierce while it lasts; but it burns out in a short time. All we need is some shelter that can hold out against that wall of flame coming down on us.”

Something in his brother’s words caused Sandy to glance back just then. What the

alarmed lad saw was a terrifying spectacle indeed. The fire was in sight, and coming on at headlong speed. The vast amount of dry material waiting to be snatched up by the leaping tongues of flame caused the fire to mount upward fully twenty feet in the air.

“It lies in both directions as far as I can see!” gasped Sandy, surprised at the extent of the conflagration that menaced them.

“Yes. I knew it, and that was why we could not get beyond the end of the line. That wind is something terrible. Look out for that herd of deer, brother; they are heading straight for us, crazed with fear!”

Just in time did Bob whirl in his tracks and fire his gun, almost in the faces of the onrushing group of maddened animals, and this action caused them to veer, so that they passed by without doing injury.

“Oh! what a narrow escape!” cried Sandy, who had been almost paralyzed by the nature of the sudden peril confronting them.

And now they saw all manner of frightened animals speeding away as fast as their legs could carry them. Besides, a flock of wild turkeys sprang up with a furious whirring of



“THE FIRE WAS . . . COMING ON AT HEADLONG SPEED.”

wings, and were gone like magic. Partridges sailed past the two boys in coveys. Here a pair of red foxes fairly flashed by, making incredible speed.

Everything seemed capable of getting out of the way of those greedy flames save the two young pioneers. It appeared at times to poor, impatient Sandy that they were having one of those ugly nightmares, where one's feet are glued to the ground, and all the while the peril plunges along toward the wretched dreamer.

“If we could only find a cave of any kind, it might keep us from getting scorched!” ventured Sandy presently, though he found he had to raise his voice considerably in order to be heard, so loud were those terrible noises that accompanied the rush of the fire wall.

“But there are none around here, for I have been looking,” answered Bob.

“I saw lots a while ago, all sorts of queer holes in the ground and rocks. Oh! don't I wish we could find just one now!” cried the other.

“Ha! here is what we are looking for, a hollow tree trunk!” Bob shouted, just at that

moment, when hope had well nigh deserted poor Sandy.

He dragged his brother over to the left, to where a rather large oak stood.

“ I just happened to look back, and saw the opening. The tree is hollow, brother! Push in, and try to close the opening all you can, so as to keep out the smoke! ”

Almost before he knew what Bob was about, Sandy found himself shoved through the rather narrow opening.

“ But it is not big enough for two! We can never stay here, Bob. Help me out! ” for all at once the lad realized what his brother meant to do.

Did he not know only too well the self-sacrificing devotion of Bob? The other meant that he should find possible safety in this snug retreat, while he took chances of discovering another hole in which to burrow. And if the fire rushed down upon him before this discovery could be made, what then? There would be only one of them go back to the new cabin in the clearing that looked out on the clear waters of the Ohio.

“ Stay where you are, and do not move, on your life, or you will ruin all! There is another

hollow tree for me! Remember mother, and do what I say!" And, giving Sandy a last push, Bob darted away.

Eagerly the boy, encased in the hollow tree, tried to follow his brother with his smarting eyes; but the smoke was growing very dense as well as pungent now, and he could hardly see at all for the tears that blinded him. So, not daring to disobey that last injunction on the part of Bob, whom he was accustomed to mind-ing, he could only press his back into the cleft, to shut out the choking smoke, and count the seconds as they passed.

The fire was quickly all around him, and he could feel the fierce heat of the burning leaves. Fear for his own safety was almost entirely lost sight of in his anxiety concerning Bob. What if he had not been able to find a hiding-place after all, and was exposed to the full fury of that scorching blast!

The very thought made Sandy feel weak. He groaned in anguish, and, from the very depths of his boyish heart, a prayer went up for the safety of the brother whom he loved so well.

Meanwhile, what of Bob, who took his life in his hand, content to feel assured that at the worst Sandy would be saved?

When Bob declared so vehemently that there was another hollow tree for him near by he said that of which he was by no means certain. He did this in order that Sandy might not push out from his refuge, and insist on sharing his fate.

Of course he still had hopes that he might yet find some friendly shelter from the flames; and, as he rushed along, his eyes sought every tree he passed, hoping thus to discover an opening, into which he might crowd himself, and bid the flames defiance.

But the precious seconds were passing, and, as yet, he had found no shelter.

Twice had he caught sight of what seemed a chance; but upon rushing up to the tree, his heart beating high with anticipation, it was only to discover that the split was not nearly large enough to allow of the passage of his body, and seconds were too valuable just then to dream of trying to slash at the wood with his sharp hunting knife in the hope of enlarging the opening.

Long before he could do this the threatening billow of fire must have reached the spot, and passed over him, so, in despair, he rushed along, his eyes now even scanning the

ground for some log behind which he might crawl.

“ Oh! ” cried Bob suddenly, as his glance caught a dark opening in a half-dead tree trunk.

It was some little distance from the ground, possibly ten feet or more, but as a few limbs remained on the decayed forest monarch, once blasted by a wind-storm while in its prime, he believed he might readily reach the friendly crevice ere the flames took hold upon his buckskin garments.

Bob was almost exhausted from his violent exertions; but he certainly gave no evidence of the fact, to judge from the way in which he ran to that tree and commenced to clamber into the lower branches.

Burning leaves were already being swept past him on the breath of the wind, to drop into new magazines of dry tinder, and start additional fires ahead of the main blaze.

Madly did he climb upward, and never would he forget the sight that met his eyes while making for that promised haven of refuge. As far as he could see, both to the east and to the west, that bank of leaping roaring flame held sway. Once Bob had been taken down to the sea by

his father, and he had never forgotten how the great waves came sweeping resistlessly on, to break with a crash on the shore. So, in his mind, appeared those onrolling billows of fire.

He could hardly breathe now. That was because of the heat and smoke combined. A great fear possessed him that perhaps after he had reached this dark cleft in the tree he might find it utterly impossible to push his way past the guarding portals. In that case all was lost, and he need not even mind dropping back to the ground, for the end would find him where he was.

But at least that fear was quickly laid to rest.

“ It’s plenty big enough! ” he cried aloud in his new delight, for the opening was now only a couple of feet away from his hands.

After that all he had to do was to cram his body through the hole, and find the shelter he craved.

“ Hurrah! ”

Somehow he could not help giving vent to that boyish shout at the prospect of cheating the fire out of its anticipated prey, although he really had little breath to spare just then. He even fixed it in his mind just how he must first of all thrust his lower limbs through the

opening, and then allow himself to slide downwards, for he could already see that the hole extended toward the earth.

It was not the first time Bob Armstrong found his nice little calculations upset by circumstances utterly beyond his control. Perhaps it would not be the last, either, since he expected to spend the major portion of his life roving the wilderness, in search of game, and in such labor as became a true pioneer.

Just as Bob reached the hole in the tree he became conscious of the fact that the old stump was being violently agitated, as though some one were climbing up below him. He even glanced down, filled with a dread lest Sandy had after all disobeyed, and chased after him.

Then something else attracted his attention and he raised his eyes, to make a most unpleasant discovery.

The hole in the tree was no longer vacant, but a bristling black head and a pair of very frightened eyes met his startled gaze!

CHAPTER XVII

A STRANGE PRISON

THE bear looked at Bob; and Bob stared at the bear.

It was a mutual surprise, though on the whole, perhaps, the animal was the more astonished, since up to this time he could not have had any inkling of the tremendous things that were occurring so near his home.

He blinked his little eyes as the glare of the great conflagration dazzled his vision; but at the same time there was not the faintest indication that Mr. Bruin thought of dropping back into his snug retreat.

Here was a pretty kettle of fish, with the bear wanting to come out, and Bob just as set upon going in. Evidently there was a conflict of opinions as to the proper thing to do when the forest took to blazing. Bruin believed flight might serve him best; while the young pioneer knew positively that in his case it would not answer at all.

Of course, when he first caught sight of that

black muzzle, the boy had given a low cry of alarm. Possibly Mr. Bear had never up to now heard a human voice save, it might be, the war whoop of the red man. It did not seem, however, to deter him in the least from trying to carry out his original plan.

He began to move upward, and Bob could hear his sharp claws digging into the interior of the stump, assisting his progress.

The situation needed prompt measures for relief. To drop down again to the ground was not to be considered for a moment, since there was the advancing fire to consider.

Fortunately Bob was a quick thinker, and often did things on the spur of the moment, as though acting from intuition rather than after deliberation and planning.

Let the bear come out, if that was his intention! Not for the whole world would he offer the slightest objection to such a process, for he wanted that snug den in the stump, and he wanted it more, apparently, than the beast did.

At the same time a collision was not at all to his liking. He had his gun strapped to his back, and was therefore in no condition to defend himself.

The only way to avoid a meeting was to give

the beast plenty of room. Undoubtedly the bear was growing frantic with fear at sight of the fire. Some inward sense told Bruin that the gravest danger of his whole life now faced him, and, unable to understand that the safest course would have been to drop back inside his fortress and let the hurricane of fire sweep past, he was bent on fleeing before the gale.

Of course it would prove a fatal error of judgment for the animal, but what was Bruin's loss might be Bob's gain.

Already his head and shoulders had issued from the hole, and he was surging forward, intent on one thing, which was to quit his quarters as speedily as his huge bulk would permit it.

Bob swung himself half way around the trunk of the tree. He found it rather difficult to hang on, but, being tenacious by nature, and a good climber, he clung desperately to what stubs of branches he found there.

Would the beast follow after him, bent on making an attack on the bold two-legged enemy that had ventured to brazenly face him at the mouth of his private castle?

Bob had little fear of this. He believed the bear was too much alarmed by the unusual spec-

tacle of the woods afire, and was seized with the same sort of panic that had sent buffalo, stags, wolves, foxes and even a gray panther bounding along to leeward as fast as their muscles could drive them.

He knew when Bruin had managed to drag his entire bulk out from the enclosure, for the scene was by this time as well lighted up as though the sun shone through the eddying smoke clouds, only it was a red, angry glare, peculiarly terrifying.

Yes, thank goodness, the beast was scurrying down the trunk of the old tree as fast as he possibly could. Fright urged him on, and Bob could not help adding to the situation by giving a shrill whoop.

“Thank you, sir; with your leave I will tumble into your late berth,” he exclaimed, as he struggled to pass around the stump again, in order to reach the opening.

Short as was the time consumed in doing this, when he reached the gap in the trunk the bear had already tumbled to the ground. Bob heard the beast give utterance to a subdued roar, as though some of the flying leaves that were afire might have alighted on his hairy hide; then the black beast galloped madly off, heading in

a direct line away from the approaching fire.

But well did Bob know that, unless Bruin had some near-by cave in mind when he thus scampered off, the chances were ten to one he would roast in the conflagration, since he could never hope to outstrip its onward rush.

Bob did not stop to see anything more just then. The air was already scorching, the smoke blinding, and there was danger lest his garments take fire unless he speedily dropped out of reach of the flying leaves.

Of course there was only one way in which to properly enter that hole in the old tree trunk. That was feet first, just as the original proprietor of the den had been in the habit of doing.

Regardless of almost everything else save the fact that he was in a tremendous hurry, the boy pushed his figure through the aperture. Since there was nothing to which he could apply his moccasined toes, in order to stay his downward movement, the consequence of haste was that Bob took a quick passage to the very bottom of the tree trunk.

Beyond a few minor scratches, however, he did not think that he had received any hurt, and

such trifles were not to be considered, when he had such a serious problem at stake as saving his life.

Looking upward he could see the opening, for through it glowed the light of the conflagration. From this he was able to judge that the aperture must be some five feet above his head.

There was ample room in the stump's interior for the boy to move around, and, on the whole, he did not doubt but that it had formed quite a pleasant den in which a bear could hibernate through the long winter.

Already could he hear the roar of the flames all around him. Really, the sound was rather terrifying, though he knew full well it would be quickly over.

At least there was now no fear of the bear returning. That possibility had worried Bob for a brief period, since it would be very inconvenient to have had the singed animal dropping down upon him in that confined space.

“ Phew! but it's getting warm in here! ” he could not help exclaiming, as the perspiration began to ooze from his pores, and he found himself actually panting for breath.

He judged that by now he was in the worst of the fire. This meant that it would have swept

past the tree in another couple of minutes, and after that the heat must gradually decrease.

Yes, already he felt sure that the loud roaring was growing sensibly less. The wave of fire had passed on, snatching up new supplies of dry fuel as it rushed along its way on the teeth of the wind.

More than once his thoughts had gone out to Sandy.

“ Oh! I hope he stayed where I put him, and that all is well,” he kept repeating to himself, as he sweltered in his hot oven.

Surely it ought to be getting much more comfortable by now; and yet Bob could not positively say that he felt any cooling influence.

Perhaps he would be wise to climb upward toward the exit, ready to thrust his head out, and see how the land lay. No sooner had this idea flashed upon him than he started to carry it out, only to make a very unpleasant discovery.

He groped around him, seeking to find some projection that would give a grip or a foothold, but only to meet with grievous disappointment.

“ Why, what shall I do? ” he cried aloud, in his sudden chagrin. “ The inside of this old

tree is as smooth as an otter slide! And I have no claws, like the bear, to help me climb up!"

He tried pushing his back against one side of the hollow, while with his knees and hands he pressed against the opposite wall. It was a favorite trick which Bob had carried out successfully on more than one occasion. Somehow it did not seem to work now.

Whether in his excitement he failed to take advantage of every little gain, or because the bear in his frequent passage up and down had polished the chute so that it was impossible for the boy to hold on, was a question Bob never found himself fully qualified to answer.

All he knew was that three times he managed to get up a little distance, only to suddenly slide down again and land in a heap at the bottom.

His failures were discouraging, to say the least. The worst of it all was that there did not seem to be any hope that, even given time, he could manage to accomplish the task, unless he took out his knife and deliberately hacked notches in the sides of his prison upon which he could rest his toes.

That would take hours of time; and meanwhile what of Sandy?

"I'll give it another try," he muttered, loth

to confess himself beaten, "and then, if I fail to make it, something else must be done, for out of this I'm going to get, by hook or by crook!"

This time he took particular pains in his movements. Inch by inch he kept advancing by that shuffling movement that always pushed his figure away from the ground.

Hope even began to find a lodgment in his breast, for the bottom of the aperture seemed now within a foot of his reach, and, once let him get a grip on that, he could count the battle won.

Then again there came a miscalculation, a trifling slip that upset his gravity, and once more poor Bob went plunging down to the bottom, worse off than ever.

He actually grunted and groaned as he sat there, feeling to see if he had received any more damage than a few bruises from this heavy fall.

And, strange to say, his back seemed to trouble him more than any other part of his body.

"Feels as if I had started to roast along my spine," he said, as he found his buckskin tunic exceedingly hot when he laid a hand on it.

Then, all at once, the truth burst upon him.

“ The old stump is afire! That’s what that flashing means I saw through the opening! Why, I may be roasted here after all! What can I do? ” he asked himself, once more struggling to his feet, and forgetting all his minor injuries as he contemplated this serious condition.

To find out if his suspicion were true he started placing his hand at various spots along the inside of the tree trunk, and, from the intense heat, he found little hope that he had made a mistake.

Was it worth while trying again to mount upward? Could he dig his toes into the smooth walls with enough vigor to sustain his weight? Four failures rather dampened his ardor along this line.

His groping hand came in contact with his musket, which he had thrown aside on first finding himself caged in this trap. It had been leaning against the side of his prison all the while. To fire it would be useless, for who was there to come to his assistance?

Suppose he managed to climb up again as far as on the last disastrous occasion, could he get any support by placing the butt of the gun upward, as a rest for one foot?

It was a last desperate resort, and poor Bob shuddered at pressing his already tortured back against that heated wooden funnel. If there were only some other way by which he might hope to gain the outer air, how gladly would he welcome it!

Just then he noticed something—he had really seen it before, but paid little attention to the fact, being wholly taken up with the idea of reaching the hole above.

And, while this new sight did not seem to hold out any positive chances for an escape from his burning prison, Bob believed that it might be worth throwing all his last efforts into this new channel.

CHAPTER XVIII

AFTER THE FOREST FIRE

THE old tree trunk was slowly giving way to the demands of Nature. It had a split up and down one side, where doubtless the wood was rotting away. Bob could see out of it — see the gray, smoky landscape, still lighted by flashes of fire. During the progress of the fire he had even watched the roaring whirlwind sweep past; and then forgotten all about this crevice in his mad desire to climb up to the hole that served as the bear's exit.

The thought that came to him was this — that perhaps with the aid of his sharp hunting knife, and a set determination to bring about results, he might manage to enlarge this narrow opening enough to admit of his bursting forth!

He did not lose another second in wondering whether it could be done. There was absolutely nothing else for him to try, if he hoped to keep from being slowly suffocated in that prison cell. He could do it, he *must* do it!

When he set to work, he found at once that

the wood was inclined to be soft and wormy, especially close to the crack. Time had overcome the hardness of the oak, and under his vigorous assault it fairly crumbled away in sections.

After what may have been a minute's labor but which seemed much longer, Bob was able to thrust his whole arm through the cleft he had made.

At that rate he would soon be free. The very thought gave him new energy, and he went at the task even more fiercely than before. But somehow his rate of progress did not seem to increase in proportion to the extra vim he threw into the work.

Evidently the deeper he cut, the harder the wood became. It was decayed only along the crevice!

Realizing this, he now turned his attention to the other side, and for a brief time all went smoothly, progress being rapid. Now he could even thrust a leg out of his cell. Twice that dimension, and the gap would be large enough to admit of the passage of his entire body.

But surely it was getting much hotter inside the stump. The fire had taken hold in earnest. He believed that the flames must be curling

around the old tree, and mounting upward while they fed upon the dead wood.

It mattered not just then that his hand grew sore from constant friction with the rough buck-horn handle of his knife. Such little things could not count when everything depended on his making a success of his effort.

Just then Bob needed all the encouragement he could find. He realized this, and to try and cheer up his drooping spirits he started talking to himself while he worked, even laughing from time to time.

It encouraged him, and could do no harm.

“ That was a good slice, Bob! ” he went on, just as though it might be his mother speaking, “ Keep it up, my boy! You’re just bound to break out of this smoke-stack soon! Nothing can stop you, now you’ve got started in the right direction. Hey! almost dropped my knife outside that time. Gracious! what if it had gone beyond my reach! You must be more careful after this, Robert, my lad! ”

He sliced away, and the opening grew wider; but, oh! how slowly its dimensions increased, and how much hotter did the air seem all around him!

Was it fated that he should be smothered

here, suffocated by the pungent smoke that caught his breath, and seemed to choke him? He would not allow himself to give way to even the thought of such a horrible thing.

“Sure you will get through, Bob!” he shouted, as he kept working away with every atom of strength. “Why, the hole must be mighty near big enough now for you to slip through. Sandy could do it, I know, and I’m not much stouter than he. Just hold out a little longer, boy! Keep at it, and success must come.”

His knife was no longer keen, since its working edge had been worn away against the tough wood; but, under the efforts Bob put into his work, it still sliced off shavings with every downward movement.

He thrust his head forward, more in the desire to suck in some of the outer air than because he expected to be able to pass it through the opening.

A thrill shook his whole frame when he found that he could thus thrust his head completely out of the prison cell. Seized with a new hope he began wriggling his body sideways, his right shoulder first of all being pushed through.

And though it proved a tremendous task, and

a tight fit, Bob managed to press completely through the narrow aperture! He fell in a heap on the ground, almost done for, yet with a feeling of thanksgiving. And his second thought was of that mother who he knew full well would be heartbroken should anything happen to either Sandy or himself.

Although Bob had apparently collapsed after bursting out from his strange prison, he did not long remain there on the earth.

“ I must be up and doing,” he cried, as he struggled to gain his feet.

There was Sandy to think of, and, besides, it was quite too hot so close to the burning stump. How he longed for a cool drink to moisten his parched throat!

“ My gun! I could not think of leaving that behind! ” he exclaimed, turning back once more, after starting to leave the scene of his singular adventure.

Throwing himself down on the ground, he pushed close up to the tree and inserted his arm, groping in the quarter where he remembered his musket had last stood. At first he failed to touch it.

“ Why, that’s odd,” he exclaimed, dismayed at the idea of losing his precious weapon, for

another could not probably have been obtained in its place for long, weary months.

Perhaps, after all, it happened to be just out of reach of his fingers. Thinking thus, Bob snatched up a piece of wood that had escaped the ground conflagration. It was about a foot or so in length, and afforded him the assistance he needed.

“ There it is, if I can only start it coming this way! ” he observed, still imbibing renewed courage from his habit of talking to himself.

It proved that he could readily manage to move the heavy gun; and almost immediately his eager fingers were clutching the butt of the musket.

“ Now, after all, I’m little the worse off for it all,” declared Bob, as he hastened to scramble further away from the pillar of fire before rising to his feet; “ and the next thing is — Sandy! ”

He seemed to feel a sudden sinking in the region of his heart just at thought of his brother, and yet, if the boy had followed his instructions to the letter, surely no ill could have overwhelmed him.

“ That tree was sounder than the one where the bear had his den,” he kept muttering to

himself as he hurried along over the blackened ground in the direction where he believed he must find the hollow oak given over to Sandy; "and after it was all over he could come out much easier than I did. But why have I not heard his signal call? Would he not follow after the fire, seeking some sign of me?"

Bob had just come through a very extraordinary adventure, for some time his life had actually hung in the balance; but he quickly forgot all about this in the new anxiety about his brother.

More than once he had to cast about him to be sure that he was heading the right way. Somehow, since the fire had burned over the ground, eating up the masses of dead leaves and other inflammable growths, things did not look the same as before.

"But the wind came down from the north," he kept saying, as he pushed doggedly on over the smoking ground; "and that is the way I'm going back now. Only, I seem to be in a new part of the forest, things look so different. But hold on, Bob, there's that cross formed by two trees that fell toward each other. I remember that plainly, and it was just after I left Sandy, too."

Now he was sure that the hollow tree must be somewhere close by. He raised his voice, and called the name of his brother.

“Sandy! Hello! where are you?”

Through the desolate forest, with its blackened carpet, the sound of his voice came back to mock him. Nothing else responded to his hail.

Louder than before he shouted, but there was no answering call. Bob again felt that terrible chill in the region of his heart. A brief time before, and he had been apparently burning up; now he was shivering.

“There it is!” he suddenly cried, as he happened to let his wandering gaze fall upon a tree that seemed to have a gap in its side.

He hurried forward. Even as he advanced other familiar things greeted him, so that his last lingering doubt vanished.

“It’s the tree, surely,” he muttered, straining his eyes to see within, and almost holding his very breath lest he discover a motionless figure in the cavity.

But it was empty!

At least Sandy had not been smothered by the dense smoke; he must have left his retreat.

“Oh! I hope he stayed here until the worst

was over!" was the cry that burst from the boy, as he stood there, staring into the empty *cache*, which he had intended to be a means of life-saving to his brother.

He turned and looked around. There did not seem to be a living thing in sight. Animals and birds had all been driven away by the fire, which was doubtless still rushing through the woods far to the south.

Was it worth while to call out again? Surely if Sandy had been within half a mile of him he must have heard that last shout!

Puzzled, and sorely distressed, Bob hardly knew what to do. He even looked again into the hollow tree, as though in that way he might receive an answer to his question as to what had become of his brother.

And he did.

For, when he looked down, he saw that there had gathered quite a quantity of dead wood within the cavity. It had not dried out since the last rain, some time before, which must have driven into the cleft. And plainly he could see marks there that must have been made by Sandy!

This gave him an idea, and he wondered why he had not thought of it before. Of what use

was his forest training if he could not ascertain whether Sandy had issued from the tree before, or after, the fire?

Down he dropped on his hands and knees. The very first thing he discovered was the positive impression made by one of his brother's new moccasins, given to him by Colonel Boone before the great hunter had said good-bye.

It was plainly made after the fire had passed, of that Bob felt certain; and the fact gave him the keenest of pleasure, since it assured him of Sandy's having passed through the siege unharmed.

But why had he not answered his shouts? Where could he have wandered to, that he failed to hear a far-reaching hail, such as the strong lungs of his brother had sent sounding through the forest?

Bob began to follow the footprints. At least Sandy must have intended to seek him, for he had commenced to chase *after* the fire.

"Oh!" gasped the boy, suddenly coming to a stop, and gazing in alarm at some new marks that met his eyes.

They were also moccasin tracks! More than that, they seemed to mingle with the smaller

ones made by Sandy. Bob bent closer, his heart seeming to leap into his throat as a dreadful fear clutched him.

One thing he noted that gave him this new chill — every one of the new footprints *toed in!* He knew what this signified. White men seldom tread that way, but it is the universal custom of Indians to walk after the fashion called “pigeon-toe” as nature undoubtedly intended should be done.

Then Indians had been here, — after the fire, too; and poor Sandy must have fallen into their hands!

CHAPTER XIX

CAPTURED BY THE SHAWANEES

“GLORY! but that was a hot time!”

Sandy thrust his head out of the hollow tree as he gasped these words. The fire had swept past as he crouched there, trying to hold his breath, and wondering if it would reach into the aperture and seize hold of his garments.

And now it was gone. He could hardly believe the truth, and that he had really escaped without any injury. Down the wind he could see the angry glow that marked the fire line. Here and there little blazes still remained, where a winnow of the dead leaves had offered fat pickings for the flames. And smoke curled up everywhere, sickening smoke that made the eyes smart.

“But what of Bob?”

That was the chief thought that surged through the mind of the boy as he crouched there inside his refuge and stared out at the strange scene.

“Oh! what if he did not find a place to hide?”

What if he was caught in the open? I can stand this suspense no longer. I *must* know the worst! ”

As he said this with a quavering voice, he issued from the tree. The earth was still hot after its recent burning; but, by picking his way, Sandy believed that he might find it possible to walk on in the direction the fire had swept along.

He called to Bob as he moved. Once his heart seemed to leap into his mouth, for he thought he saw something move ahead; but, though he turned a little aside so as to advance that way, he failed to see it again.

Then he stopped to consider. Was it wise for him to wander off in this manner, without a definite plan? Had not Bob told him to stay where he was until he came? He might get lost, and only add to their troubles. Yes, perhaps he had better restrain his impatience, and wait a reasonable time to see whether Bob would not show himself.

It was while he stood thus, close to an unusually large tree, that something came to pass, possibly the very last thing in all the world Sandy was thinking about.

A pair of muscular bronzed arms suddenly

closed about the boy. Struggling hard, and twisting his head back, he found to his horror that he was looking into the painted face of an Indian warrior.

Then he heard the brave give vent to a screech, which must have been some sort of signal, for immediately three other feathered heads popped into view, one of them from behind the very tree where Sandy had believed he saw something move.

In vain the boy struggled with all his might; his strength was not equal to that of the man who held him, and, when the four ugly looking red men had gathered around him, the nearest snatched his musket away.

“Ugh!” grunted his captor, suddenly releasing his arms.

Sandy stood there in their midst, white and alarmed, but trying to summon all his resolution. And, indeed, if ever the boy needed his courage it was at that moment, when he realized that he was alone and powerless in the hands of the hostile Shawanees.

Would they proceed to kill him then and there? He had heard terrible stories about the cruelty of these copper-colored sons of the wilderness.



“ A PAIR OF MUSCULAR BRONZED ARMS SUDDENLY CLOSED
ABOUT THE BOY.”

Now they were jabbering away in an unknown tongue. Occasionally they would point at him, as though he must be the subject of their talk, as he had no doubt was the case.

“ Oh! I wonder if they really mean to do it,” was what Sandy was saying to himself, as he listened to the vigorous language, which to him was utterly without sense, although he felt sure that Colonel Boone could have understood every word of it.

Then he saw one fellow, who seemed to scowl, fingering his tomahawk in a suggestive manner that made Sandy's very blood run cold.

Thinking he saw a chance to bolt, the boy suddenly sprinted off. But ere he had gone twenty feet his arm was clutched in a dusky hand, and his flight brought to a halt.

At least one of his captors could speak some English, and he shook his knife in Sandy's face:

“ No run — paleface boy try more, we kill! ”

Sandy managed to pluck up a little fresh hope. From what the painted brave said, if he tried again to escape they would do something desperate. Did that mean they would let him live if he gave in, and allowed himself to be made a prisoner?

The man who gripped him held his hands behind, while another secured his wrists together with buckskin thongs. That looked as though they meant to take him along with them perhaps to their village.

And so presently Sandy found himself marching along over the blackened ground, hedged in by a quartette of vicious looking Indians.

They paid little attention to him, though if at any time he seemed to slacken his pace, which was a jog-trot, such as Indians can keep up all day, he received, as a gentle reminder that he was to put on fresh speed, a dig in the ribs from one of those in the rear.

Sandy never forgot that little excursion. While he may not have covered a great many miles, his spirits were so low that it seemed the most miserable period of his whole life.

What had happened to Bob? That was the burden of his thoughts. He even found himself wondering whether his brother could have fallen in with these red men, and met with disaster. Then he noticed that one of the four carried a gun, and that it was such a weapon as the French traders used in dealing with the Indians, and not a staunch musket like the English possessed.

If Bob had escaped both the peril of the fire and that of the Indians, would he discover what had happened to his brother and carry the news home?

By degrees they had edged away from the burned tract. The wind had died out, and finally, after crossing a line of flickering flames that was making but poor progress, Sandy discovered that they no longer walked through blackened stuff, but upon leaves that had not felt the touch of fire.

“Why, there must have been a shower over this way,” he said to himself, noticing that the ground seemed wet; and that was exactly what had happened.

He heard his captors exchanging remarks again, and from their manner guessed that the end of their pilgrimage must be close at hand.

“Perhaps it is a village they are taking me to,” he said, remembering what he had heard from Blue Jacket.

Surely that was a dog barking somewhere ahead. Did the Indians have dogs? Yes, he remembered that this was so. Blue Jacket had told him how they had been bred from wolves, that long ago had been taken captive, so that

they still possessed many of the savage traits that had marked their ancestors.

And then as they pushed out of the forest he suddenly set eyes on the Shawanee village. It stood on the bank of a small stream, no doubt a tributary to the great Ohio. There were scores of skin lodges, each one gaudily painted with rude scenes representing some stirring incidents in the lives of the braves who owned them.

In spite of the distressing condition in which he found himself placed, Sandy could not help feeling interested in the strange spectacle, for never before had he so much as looked upon a genuine Indian wigwam.

He was not allowed to enjoy it long, however. As soon as the news that a prisoner had been brought in was circulated among the dusky occupants of the lodges, the utmost confusion abounded.

Braves came thronging out to meet the returning warriors, squaws chattering, papooses squalling, and even half-naked youngsters adding to the clamor.

Poor Sandy was pinched and poked and pushed about at the hands of the throng until he really feared for his life. Angry looks were

cast upon him. Apparently there had been braves who had gone forth from this village upon the warpath to return no more. They seemed to want to vent their anger upon the head of the white boy who had fallen into their hands.

Sandy was glad when they thrust him inside a lodge. So roughly was this done that the boy, rendered partly helpless by his bonds, reeled and fell on his face on the ground. Fortunately, however, the earth proved yielding, so that he was not seriously injured.

Struggling to a sitting position, he tried to bolster up his courage by remembering all that he had ever heard about Indian villages from Pat O'Mara, and also from Daniel Boone himself, during that day's tramp through the forest.

“ And they said that these redskins like to burn their prisoners at the stake,” Sandy whispered to himself, as he shook his head dolefully. “ Oh! I hope they will never try that! I'm sure that was roast enough for me in that old tree. Perhaps now that old hag means to adopt me. She acted like it, when she threw her wrinkled arms around me, and jabbered so. And Colonel Boone told me how he was adopted

into an Indian tribe, not long ago. She is a horrible looking old squaw; but better be made her son than — the other thing! ”

The day slowly died, and Sandy looked to the coming of night with new terror. He could not exactly remember whether it was in the evening or the morning that the Indians always burned their prisoners.

“ It would make some difference if I only knew,” he said, with hope still fluttering in his boyish heart.

He had some difficulty in creeping to the entrance of the lodge, but was determined to peep out again and see if there were any grim signs, such as the planting of a stake or the gathering of brush.

“ I can see nothing out of the way,” he muttered, after carefully looking as well as the circumstances allowed.

Fires had been lighted, and the squaws seemed to be getting a meal ready, though, from what he had heard, Sandy understood that the red men have really no set time for eating, like their paleface brothers; simply waiting until they are hungry, and then satisfying the demands of nature with food.

It was a scene of bustle, with many dusky figures flitting about the fires.

“ I wonder if I could manage to get away from here, in case I got my hands free? ” Sandy was saying; but almost immediately he discovered that close by was a squatting figure, evidently a guard, for he held a gun in his hands and seemed to be intently watching the head of the prisoner.

So Sandy with a sigh drew back and waited for something to turn up. He was a most disconsolate figure as he crouched there, anticipating the worst; yet, while thinking of home and mother, trying to hope for the best.

Then suddenly he started. Surely that was not the voice of an Indian he heard! Again he scrambled to the opening and thrust out his head.

A neighboring fire lighted up the scene. It was of unusual size, and the boy immediately conceived the idea that the Indians meant to hold some sort of council, perhaps to decide his fate, for many were gathering around, with braves in the middle, and the squaws and boys on the outer fringe.

And standing close by, in earnest conversation with one who seemed to be something of a

chief, was a man in buckskin, a white man at that. At first Sandy felt a quick pulsation of fierce joy. Just to see a white man among all these dusky sons of the wilderness seemed to give him fresh courage.

Then a spasm of chagrin passed over him, for he had remembered the stories told by Daniel Boone of those renegades, such as Simon Girty, who had turned their hand against their kind, and fought side by side with the savages, more cruel even than the Indians they had taken to be their brothers.

“But no, he must be a French trader,” he said immediately, as he listened to the voice of the man in buckskin; “like that Jacques Larue we met when we stopped at Will’s Creek on the way from Virginia. It is the same! Yes, now I can see his face plainly. Oh! I wonder if he would help me get away!”

Filled with this newly-awakened hope the boy prisoner lifted his voice and called out:

“Monsieur Larue! oh! come this way, if you please!”

CHAPTER XX

THE COUNCIL FIRE

“WHO calls me?” exclaimed the French trader, looking around him in some surprise.

Evidently, although he must have known that the Indians had a prisoner, whose fate was to be decided at the council that was even then gathering, he could never have dreamed, up to now, that it was any one who knew him.

“This way, please, monsieur. I am here in the lodge! Just to your right; now, if you look down you will see me!” cried Sandy, eagerly, though, if asked, he could not have told just why he fancied the Frenchman would assist him in the least.

“Sacre! what haf we here? A young Eenglish viper, it seems. Ha! and surely ve haf before now met! Is it not so?” said the trader, as by the light of the council fire he saw Sandy’s face.

“Oh! yes, it was at Will’s Creek. You remember we came into the place just before you

left there, monsieur? You asked my father ever so many questions about what his business was. I am Sandy Armstrong, the youngest of his boys.”

“ So, zat ees the vay ze vind blows? You belong to zat Eenglish colony zat mean to cheat honest men out of zere bread and butter. Worst of all, you own to being ze son of ze very man who would take away our trade with ze red men! Ho! Sandy Armstrong, say you? A very good evening to you, Sandy. It ees quite varm, but perhaps not yet so varm as it may be, eh? ”

The words were filled with much more of bitterness than seemed possible on the surface. Although he had not yet appealed to the trader for assistance, Sandy understood that no matter what he said, it would never touch the stony heart of the Frenchman. Jacques Larue was one of those frontiersmen who, having spent much of their lives amid scenes of turmoil and violence, could not listen to a plea for mercy, especially when uttered in an English voice.

“ But I am a prisoner here, and these Indians may mean to put me to death? ” the boy went on, making a last effort to touch the trader.

With a shrug of the shoulders the indifferent Frenchman answered back:

“Zat would be a great pity — for ze muzzer. But what would you haf me do? Zese Indians haf been my good friends. Zey haf lost many of zere best braves in zat battle with your people. It is ze habit of ze red men to put prisoners to ze death. I am sorry for you, boy; but my business it ees too valuable to reesk it by offending zese friends. So again, I bid you ze good evening, young Armstrong.”

Trembling with indignation, Sandy cast discretion to the winds.

“Yes, I know why you will not lift a finger to try and save me!” he cried aloud; “you hate my father just because he expects to trade honestly with the friendly Indians. I have heard Colonel Boone speak of you and your breed. You set the redskins against the English — you fill them with firewater, and start them out on the warpath, to burn and murder. You are like a snake in the grass, Jacques Larue. And some day the rifle of a true borderer like Boone will lay you low!”

The Frenchman could hardly believe his ears. For a mere youth to brave him thus to his face

staggered him. He took a step toward the lodge, and half raised his arm as though tempted to strike the boy.

“ Yes, that would be just like a man of your stripe, Monsieur Larue. Helpless, a prisoner, and with my hands tied behind my back, hit me if it please you! ” dared the impetuous lad, not even deigning to move back into the recesses of his lodge.

“ Sacre! I forgot! ” muttered the Frenchman, bringing himself up with a round turn; and, whirling on his heel, he strode off toward the circle of braves.

Presently several warriors were dispatched to convey the captive to the council ring. One of them Sandy recognized as the fellow who had spoken a few words of English at the time of his capture.

“ Cut my hands loose, ” he pleaded, backing up to this brave in a suggestive manner. “ Surely you need not be afraid of my running away. But my arms are so tired of being cramped in this way. Use your knife, Mr. Eagle Feather! ” for, though he had no idea of what the name of the brave might be, he recognized the three feathers in his scalp-lock as belonging to the king of birds.

“ Ugh! paleface boy say true. No danger run away! ” and with the words the other drew his knife, the same with which he had once threatened Sandy, across the stout buckskin thongs.

“ That feels better; and thank you for it,” observed the boy, with a nod, as his hands fell apart, and he could chafe his numb wrists into a state of feeling.

“ Ugh! paleface boy much brave! Tell Swift Bullet him fool! Ugh! ” said the warrior, as he took hold of Sandy’s right arm, a companion leading him on the left.

From these few words the boy understood, first, that the French trader must go by the name of Swift Bullet among the Shawanees; second, that the brave had heard all that had just passed between them; and, last of all, that possibly he did not chance to bear the best of feelings toward the French trader, since he evidently admired the stripling who dared defy Larue.

When he found himself in the midst of that great throng Sandy’s heart misgave him. Every face around the triple circle of braves looked dark and forbidding. In fact, aside from this single warrior who had helped cap-

ture him, he did not seem to have a single friend in the village.

The French trader was present, sitting cross-legged beside the head chief. He smiled most of the time, as though simply amused at what was going on. Evidently Jacques Larue cared precious little whether the council decided upon the death of the young English pioneer or not. He looked upon all such as a breed of vipers, to be treated with scant ceremony whenever encountered.

Of course Sandy could not understand what was said, so far as words went; but there was no mistaking the gestures of the speakers, some of which were passionate and striking. They were calling for his blood! Those who had fallen in battle must be avenged. Boy or not, he belonged to the hated English, and was not their country, given to them by the Great Spirit, being invaded by these bold compatriots of Boone and Harrod?

Those very names were mentioned, and by Indian lips. Somehow, in his great extremity, the imperilled lad seemed to draw new inspiration from just hearing that magical name of Boone. He noted that every time the chief uttered it there was an uneasy movement that

passed through the entire assemblage; while many a head was half turned, as though a sudden fear had sprung into being lest the famous borderer make his appearance there before them, demanding that the prisoner be released.

What manner of man could this be, that even the mention of his name should cause a shiver to pass through an Indian council?

“ I believe they’re going to do it! ” Sandy whispered to himself, when he saw how still more threatening looks were cast upon him.

Then came the medicine man, dressed in most fantastic garb, and wearing a head of a bear, that had attached to it the horns of a buffalo. Into the circle he danced, waving his hands, and crooning some weird song that seemed to hold his hearers entranced, though to Sandy it sounded like the worst gibberish he had ever heard.

But soon he, too, was following the movements of the old charmer with deepest anxiety; for it became impressed upon his mind that, after all, much depended on what he might decide. The medicine man was believed to be in direct communication with the Great Spirit, and could, after certain incantations, learn what the will of the Manitou might be.

If he said that the prisoner must be burned, nothing could save Sandy. On the contrary, should the medicine man declare that the voice of Manitou declared that some other fate be meted out to the paleface captive, his word was law.

Just then Sandy had his attention called to a movement in another quarter.

“ Oh! there is the old squaw who hugged me! ” he exclaimed, almost holding his breath in suspense; “ and she seems to be wanting to jump forward when the right time comes. All may not be lost. Perhaps I could never love her; but I'd be grateful if she saved my life! ”

Once the boy had been seized with a sudden hope, and had eagerly scanned each and every face in all that triple circle.

“ No, he is not here, ” he muttered in a disappointed tone; “ perhaps he never got back home. Perhaps his wound broke out again, and he fell by the way! Such hard luck! ”

He was thinking of Blue Jacket, the young brave whom he and Bob had nursed back from the border of the grave. But Blue Jacket was certainly not there; or, if so, realizing his inability to help his young white friend, he kept

his face hidden in his blanket of buffalo skin.

And now the dancing medicine man's movements grew more rapid. He whirled his arms more violently above his head, and the various metal ornaments which were hung about his person jangled not unmusically, adding to the weird aspect of the scene.

Apparently he had reached a point where he was about to launch his decision at the waiting warriors. Just then the harsh voice of a squaw was heard, and the old woman whom Sandy had noticed jumped into the ring, speaking eagerly, and making all sorts of impressive gestures with her talon-like hands.

The prisoner shuddered as he gazed; but something like gratitude entered his heart. Repulsive as she appeared, the old squaw was trying to save his life!

He watched the actions of the medicine man closely, as though he could tell in that way whether the request of the bereaved squaw would be granted, and the prisoner turned over to her to take the place of the son who would never again bring home to her lodge a share of the spoils of the hunt.

Then the boy's very heart seemed to turn

cold. Something about the manner of the entire assemblage seemed to say that the sentiment of the council was adverse. And doubtless the wily old medicine man usually gave the answer just as he saw it expressed on the faces of the warriors!

They would condemn the prisoner, then, to be put to death! Brave lad though Sandy had shown himself on more than one occasion, he might easily be pardoned for experiencing a cold chill when the truth broke upon him.

He seemed to feel a choking sensation in his throat, as though he could hardly breathe. Somehow, just at that moment his mind flew far away to the bank of the great Ohio, to a new cabin he could picture, where a grieving woman sat beside the large fireplace, and there was an empty stool at the rough table.

“Mother!” he whispered, softly.

And then he shut his teeth hard. At least they should not see him quail, these copper-colored men of the wilderness. Always had he heard that, above everything else, Indians admired bravery. When death in its more terrible aspect faced them, they pretended to show utter contempt, laughing their enemies in the face, and mocking them with their last breath.

Well, he was an Armstrong! They had ever been a hardy race, and across the water had always taken a share in all the wars that rent Old England. He would show that, though but a boy in years, he had inherited the spirit of his ancestors. Not one groan, not one cry for mercy, would they hear falling from his lips!

The squaw ceased to implore. She had fallen back to wait for the decision of the wizard, who was once again beginning to wave his arms about, and fix his mincing steps to keep time with his singsong words.

Sandy was keeping his eyes glued upon the swaying figure. There was a sort of fascination about it all, just as though his own life did not hang in the balance.

“It’s coming!” he muttered, presently, as he saw the heads of the warriors inclined eagerly toward the magician.

Sandy was conscious of a little confusion near by. He could not tear his eyes away from the dancer long enough to ascertain what it meant. Perhaps some prowling dog had been caught by a squaw stealing from her lodge, and was being soundly kicked and berated in consequence.

The sounds were really coming closer. Loud voices could be heard, excited voices too, but in the Indian tongue. Sandy was not much interested, because he fancied that it was only some late comers, who were demanding to be told what the council was about, not knowing of the capture of a white.

Now he could not help noticing, because there was a swaying of the outer lines, where the squaws and boys congregated. Louder grew the voices. Even the medicine man paused in the act of delivering the decree of Manitou, and every face was turned toward the quarter whence the growing clamor sounded.

And as Sandy, half starting to his feet, stared, and held his breath, he saw a figure he knew only too well come limping into the lighted arena.

It was Blue Jacket!

CHAPTER XXI

TIT FOR TAT

YES, it was Blue Jacket, but apparently a wreck of the young Indian whom Sandy had last seen under the friendly roof of the new Armstrong cabin.

He was blackened with smoke, his buckskin garments showing holes that the forest fire had burned; the proud feather that had once adorned his scalp-lock hung low over his ear, and broken; he seemed hardly able to drag himself past the wondering squaws, and reach the centre of the triple ring of warriors.

But it was Blue Jacket, alive and in the flesh, for all that.

“Glory! he has come home just in time to save me!” Sandy kept saying to himself, as he stared. “And that terrible old medicine man was going to seal my fate! Glory! could there be any greater luck? And didn’t dear old Bob say the bread we cast upon the waters might return ere many days? Yes, it has come back, principal and interest!”

Every eye was fastened upon the figure of the young brave. Not one present at the council fire but knew he had a story to tell that would thrill their souls. Even the squaws, seldom allowed to listen to the serious councils around the sacred fire, bent forward, the better not to lose a single word.

Blue Jacket began to speak. At first his manner was sedate. He was telling of how he had fought in that night battle, of the wound that had left him on the field and how he crept away, hoping to return to his lodge among his people.

Then Sandy, who could fairly interpret from his manner, knew that he spoke of finding himself alone, weakened from loss of blood, and unable to even call for assistance.

Expecting to become the prey of wild beasts during the night, he had, with the stoicism of the red man, awaited the end calmly. Then came the paleface boys. His bronzed face lighted up as he told how they tenderly carried him to the brow of the hill overlooking the river, and cared for his wounds.

Now he became dramatic in his recital, and held his hearers spellbound. Surely he was speaking of that white mother now, telling how

she advised that he be cared for and made well. It was such a revelation, so entirely different from all that the savage Indian nature understood, that the old men wagged their heads from time to time, and looked at one another helplessly.

Blue Jacket went on. Now he was telling of one paleface warrior who had sought his life, and how those boys stood between. Sandy guessed this. He was hanging on the excited words of the young Shawanee just as though he could fully grasp the full sense of the harangue.

Suddenly Blue Jacket ceased. Striding forward as well as his lame leg would permit, he threw a protecting arm across the shoulders of Sandy, as he faced once more the throng of red men.

“ My brother! ”

That was all he said, but his manner told the story. He stood ready to sacrifice his life, if need be, to save this paleface lad from the stake. Simple, yet eloquent beyond description, was his attitude as he thus stood there.

Would his will prevail? Had his rough eloquence reached the hearts of those sons of the wilderness?

In years to come the name of Blue Jacket was fated to pass into the pages of history as a famous Indian orator, who could sway the minds of his people as few others were able. And in this fierce harangue, delivered in his youth, he made a reputation as a leader which was to follow him in all after years.

The old men exchanged looks. They nodded their heads gravely.

“ I surely believe he has turned the scale! ” breathed the anxious Sandy, noting these significant signs.

The shrewd old medicine man could not always foretell the weather; but he was able to discern a sudden change in the wind of popular approval. Before this dramatic coming of the young and wounded brave he knew the consensus of opinion ran strongly toward putting the prisoner to the stake. It was different now!

And so the wily old fellow once more started his incantations and whirlings, just as though he were taking them up at the point where he had been interrupted; but with a decided difference that even Sandy could notice.

His manner now was not fierce and ugly; he no longer made swift downward strokes

with his extended arms, but extended them upward in a beseeching manner, as though imploring Manitou to have mercy.

Then, after a supreme exhibition of his powers, with a great rattling of wampum belt, and jangling metal discs that were strung about his person, he moved over to where Sandy stood, with the dusky protecting arm of Blue Jacket still flung about his shoulders.

Holding his hands above the white prisoner, the medicine man uttered a string of words, amid much bobbings of the head. Although he could interpret not a single expression, Sandy knew full well that in this way the wizard was declaring he had been taken under the especial charge of the Great Spirit, and that henceforth no Shawanee hand should be raised against a member of the Armstrong family.

The French trader had listened to all this with a sneer on his lips, while his face grew dark as though it pleased him not a bit.

Sandy had little discretion, as we have seen more than once. With his usual impetuosity he could not restrain himself from flashing a look of triumph toward Jacques Larue. The trader saw it, and gritted his teeth. After that, he would doubtless feel more than ever a vi-

cious spite against anything that bore the brand of an Armstrong.

“Come!” said Blue Jacket, leading Sandy away.

“With the greatest of pleasure,” replied that worthy, feeling as though a tremendous weight had been taken from his shoulders, as indeed was the case.

The young Shawanee led his white brother to his lodge, where an old squaw, his mother undoubtedly, proudly awaited them. Nothing was too good for the paleface who had saved the life of her boy. But first of all, Sandy insisted upon the wounds of the young warrior being dressed.

“You must have been caught in the fire, too, Blue Jacket!” he declared, as he noted the condition of the warrior’s scanty garments, which at least had been whole at the time he was in the new settlement.

“Much time, Sandy. Near gone when reach creek and dive in!” replied the other, simply.

And that was all he could be persuaded to say about his adventure, yet Sandy felt positive that the young brave must have gone through a thrilling experience, with the fire surrounding him, and wounded in the bargain.

He could picture what Blue Jacket declined to relate.

“ They have spared my life, Blue Jacket,” observed the white boy, after a time, when he had assisted the squaw to bind up the reopened wound of the brave once more; “ but do they mean to keep me here a prisoner? Am I to never see my people again — dear old Bob, Kate, father, and my mother? ”

The budding warrior looked at him, and actually a faint smile came upon his face. Sandy could not remember having ever seen him show so much feeling before.

“ You wait, Sandy,” he said in a low voice; “ leave that to Blue Jacket. Give word Bob you be free. Me no fail! Never forget him mother, not much! ”

But Sandy had caught one word that riveted his attention.

“ When did you promise Bob to save me? Where did you see him, Blue Jacket? ” he demanded, eagerly.

“ Me leave since sunset. Bob fix best can,” and saying this the young Indian pointed down at his injured limb.

“ Do you mean that you have been with my brother since the fire? ” cried Sandy, his face

lighting up with a great joy, for that would tell him Bob could not have been injured in the forest conflagration, as he had greatly feared.

Blue Jacket nodded gravely in the affirmative. English words did not come readily to his lips, and, when he could make a gesture take their place, he seldom failed to do so.

“ Bob find in creek. Him help 'long. Leg bad; much limp. Blue Jacket make like papoose. Get here just in time. Not much good. Ugh! ” he grunted.

“ Then Bob came along with you? ” persisted Sandy, determined to drag the whole truth out by degrees.

“ Come 'long, yes. No think safe enter village. Hide in woods. Wait till fox him bark three times. Bob know. Bob safe! ”

“ Hurrah! that's good news you're telling me, Blue Jacket! ” exclaimed Sandy, exultantly. “ So Bob is safe, and near at hand right now! Why, he never even went back to the settlement to tell the story, and get assistance. Surely he is a brother to be proud of. Tell me, Blue Jacket, did he send any message by you? Have you got any of the white man's writing to give me? ”

Whereupon the other gravely drew some-

thing from the bosom of his torn hunting shirt, and extended it to Sandy.

“ Me forget. Bob say all right. No can understand spider crawl on bark. Sandy know. Bob tell,” he said quaintly.

There were not many words, and these had been scratched by some sharp-pointed flint, so that it was only with an effort that the boy could make them out by the light of the fire in front of the lodge.

“ SANDY: — Keep up a brave heart. We are going to get you out of there to-night. Trust Blue Jacket. He is true as steel. Bring gun.
“ BOB.”

Sandy smiled as he saw that reference to the old musket; and yet, after all, it was not so strange that cautious, wise Bob should remember how much of their anticipated pleasure in hunting during the months that were ahead would be taken away if Sandy were without a weapon.

He read the message aloud to his friend. Blue Jacket evidently saw nothing singular about that mention of a gun. He knew what it meant to be without the means of obtaining

food in that great wilderness. What bow and arrows, a tomahawk, or a crude knife, meant to an Indian, a gun stood for in the eyes of a white man. And so Blue Jacket only nodded his head gravely as he listened, saying finally:

“Get gun all right. No fear. Much skins here. Swap with brave for gun. Go now.”

He evidently believed in striking while the iron was hot, for, stooping down, he gathered in his arms several valuable skins, among them some beautiful otter pelts, and started out.

The squaw never raised a finger to interfere, yet she knew that Blue Jacket was very weak and sore from his tremendous exertions in trying to escape from the pursuing fire. And she was his mother, too. But then Sandy realized that Indian mothers differed in many respects from those of white boys. Blue Jacket, was he not a warrior now, and as such fully competent to decide for himself? The old squaw no doubt would have held her tongue had he declared it to be his intention to start back to the white settlement with Sandy, even though she knew it must be the means of bringing about his death.

Sure enough, Blue Jacket must have gauged well the temper of the brave who had obtained

the old flintlock musket, and knew just how to wheedle him out of his recent prize, for, when the young Indian returned, he placed in Sandy's eager hands not only the gun, but all other things taken from the prisoner at the time he fell into the hands of the four Shawanee warriors — his powder horn, carved with considerable rude skill by Bob, the bullet pouch decorated with colored porcupine quills, his hatchet, knife, and even the little bag, in which Sandy was accustomed to keeping his flint and steel, some dry tinder for starting fires, and a few trifling odds and ends.

“ Why, my brother! ” cried the delighted white boy, “ you are a bigger medicine man than the old fellow who danced, and shook those hollow gourds with the dried beans inside. Here are all my belongings, with not one thing missing. Oh! I tell you, it was a fine day I discovered you there in the grass, Blue Jacket. For you have returned what little we did a dozen fold! ”

But evidently the young Indian had his own ideas about that, for he shook his head, and made a grimace. He would never forget how those boys had stood between when the irate settler, Anthony Brady, demanded his blood!

“ No can repay. Armstrong name never can forget. You see. To-night we go away. Bob wait to show way home. Blue Jacket him not able go far. Much sorry!” he said, as he limped about the lodge to try his poor limb.

But Sandy gripped the Shawanee’s hand, while his boyish face fairly beamed with the affection he felt toward the gallant young savage.

CHAPTER XXII

THE ESCAPE

“WHEN can we go, Blue Jacket?” asked the boy, with his usual impatience.

“No can get away yet some time. Sandy look out,” came the reply.

“Well, I see what you mean,” admitted the prisoner, reluctantly. “There does seem to be considerable of a stir around. Everybody is moving about. Even the dogs seem to be prowling around sniffing at things.”

“Ugh! much stir. Talk heap. French trader try to palaver with chiefs. Make think English bad men. Steal Indian country, kill squaws, papooses, all. Ugh!” and, from the way Blue Jacket said this, it was evident that he feared the influence of the smooth-voiced Jacques Larue would undo all the good his harangue had accomplished.

Not that his people would think of putting Sandy to the stake. That bugbear had been effectually squelched after he had told how kind the two Armstrong boys had shown them-

selves to him. But they might refuse to let the prisoner go free, demanding that he be forced to join the tribe. The lodge was still to be a prison, for the squaw had betaken herself off, and Blue Jacket had said he would not be allowed to stay with his white brother.

Even Sandy understood something of his danger. Perhaps it had to do with his impatience to get away from the village, with its clamor and its strange inhabitants.

He remembered the skinny old crone who had wanted to adopt him as her own son. She meant it all in kindness, perhaps, but the very thought made poor Sandy shiver.

“ But look here, Blue Jacket, what about Bob? ” he said, presently, after he had turned away from peeping out at the exit of the lodge.

“ Bob wait, ” replied the Indian with his customary taciturnity.

“ Yes, but when time passes, and I fail to come, he may get impatient and do something that will get him into trouble? ”

At this the young Indian shrugged his shoulders. Perhaps he had caught the manner from the French traders, oily men who often visited the Shawanees in their villages to barter poor guns and powder for their valuable pelts.

“ Bob no Sandy! ” was his only comment; and it struck home, too, for the one who heard gave a little chuckle, as he hastened to reply:

“ You are right about that, Blue Jacket; and perhaps it's just as well that he is not. One hothead in the family is quite enough. But you think, then, Bob will bide his time patiently, and wait to hear from you? ”

“ Him say, ” answered the other, calmly.

“ Oh! ” observed Sandy; but he saw a great light.

It told him what a distinct impression that sober brother of his must have made on the observing young Indian during the week of their intercourse. Accustomed to reading people just as Sandy might the pages of a printed book, Blue Jacket knew that, when Bob Armstrong said a thing, that was just what he meant. His simple word was, in the eye of this native of the woods, as good as another's bond.

Presently Sandy spoke again, for he could not keep his mind long off that fascinating subject.

“ Is he near the border of the village, Blue Jacket? ” he asked.

“ Much close. Blue Jacket him hide Bob.

No can find. P'raps dog smell him. Not much danger that. You wait. Sleep. Time come bimeby. Blue Jacket crawl in lodge, wake. Make not noise, but move like snake. Ugh!"

With that the young Indian abruptly left him.

Sandy threw himself down on the blanket and bearskin which he found in his prison. Perhaps what the Indian suggested would be a wise thing for him to do. He was very tired, and trembling with excitement. Of course, he hardly hoped to sleep any; but even lying there would rest him more or less.

But, despite his fears, he must have passed away into dreamland very shortly after dropping on the soft robes, for he could not remember doing any great amount of thinking over his past troubles and the uncertain future.

A cold hand touching his face awakened him.

Before he could utter a sound he heard a low hiss that warned him against making a single exclamation. It was well Blue Jacket adopted this course, because naturally Sandy supposed himself safe at home, in his own newly-fashioned bed, and that it was Bob who had disturbed his dreams.

Instantly he understood. The skin lodge was almost in darkness. Still, something of a flickering light seeped in through little openings at the entrance; and he could just manage to make out a bending figure that crouched beside him.

“Is it you, Blue Jacket?” he whispered softly, as his hand went out to feel of this figure.

Again that warning hiss greeted him. Then there was a gentle pull at his buckskin tunic, which Sandy could not mistake. His ghostly visitor wanted him to follow his lead.

Expecting some such summons, Sandy had made all preparations for a quick departure. His precious gun was lying close beside him; moreover, he had secured powder-horn, bullet pouch, and all other belongings, so that nothing would be left behind.

Blue Jacket turned and crawled away. To Sandy's surprise the young Shawanee did not head toward the opening of the lodge; but common sense told him why. There was a fire still burning out there, and possibly some brave might awaken just at the critical moment when they were passing.

Evidently Blue Jacket had crept in at the

rear, and meant to return the same way. He knew the possibilities of his own wigwam. Sandy wriggled his body under the tightly drawn skin that, with its fellows, formed the wigwam. He could just barely see the figure of his guide moving off ahead. And, when Blue Jacket had said they must glide like the snake that goes upon its belly, he certainly hit the truth, for Sandy could not discover the slightest movement of either arms or legs. Still the other made fair progress.

Between lodges, avoiding the smouldering fires, they went. Surely the red guide must have figured every inch of the route in advance. Not even a dog seemed to be along the course; and Sandy's admiration for his friend increased by bounds with every yard that they advanced.

He had been wise enough to observe the location of Blue Jacket's lodge, and hence knew that they were now heading in a general way toward the bank of the small stream near which this temporary hunting camp of the Shawnees had been located.

This gave him a sudden and brilliant idea. Did Blue Jacket mean that they should make their escape by water? It would save many

weary miles of tramping, which task Sandy was not in very good physical condition to undertake.

More than once the dark figure ahead came to a pause, and lay as still as a log. Sandy was keenly awake to the situation, and copied his actions to the letter. On one occasion a couple of dogs came running past, having evidently been hunting on their own account in the forest. They stopped to sniff the air, but luckily they were not on the windward side of the crouching figures; and so the presence of a paleface was not discovered; for soon they went on among the lodges, to lie down and rest after their long chase.

Another time it was a moving warrior who caused alarm. But he seemed to have only been down to the river for a drink, for he walked past the spot where the two shadows lay without any suspicion that anything was amiss.

It was an exciting time for poor Sandy, and his heart seemed to be up in his throat with suspense as he kept his agonized eyes fastened on that tall, dusky figure, until it was lost among the neighboring lodges.

All now seemed well, and the coast clear.

Rapidly Blue Jacket advanced. No longer was he content to wriggle like the rattlesnake. He had first arisen to his knees, and finally to his feet. True, he limped sadly, and Sandy knew that, with an Indian's stoicism, his guide must be repressing the groans that a white boy would have uttered.

“He's game, all right,” Sandy was saying to himself, filled with gratitude toward the young Indian; “good Blue Jacket! Will I ever forget this? May my right arm wither if I should! And now, I wonder where Bob is?”

They had gone some little distance from the village, so that there no longer seemed to be any danger that they would be seen if they walked erect. Sandy had impulsively thrown an arm about his companion, meaning to help him. Perhaps at another time the proud young Shawanee might have indignantly declined to accept any assistance; but he was weak, and he had learned to feel a singular affection for his two white brothers.

They came to a stop near a tangle of thickets.

“Listen!” said Blue Jacket.

Then close by, so that it actually startled the

white boy, came the bark of the red fox, twice repeated. And he remembered what his guide had said about the signal which Bob was to recognize. Anxiously Sandy waited, every nerve on edge for fear lest his brother might have gone.

There was a stir in the thicket, and then came a low voice saying:

“Sandy! Blue Jacket, is it you?”

“Here!” exclaimed the escaped prisoner, unable to longer restrain his feelings; and in another moment he was clasped in a brother’s sturdy embrace.

“No time lose,” observed the practical Indian. “Come long me. River close by. Canoe p’raps wait. Paddle home. Tell white squaw Blue Jacket much glad.”

In two minutes they had arrived at the border of the little stream, where Blue Jacket produced his canoe, hidden for this very purpose late that evening.

“Go quick! No time lose. Mebbe alarm come. Who can tell?” said the Indian.

Sandy had crept into the frail boat made of skins, and Bob was about to do so, after squeezing the hand of their red friend, when a smooth voice suddenly said:

“ Sacre! it ees just as I thought when I saw him paddle his canoe here. Not so quick, young messieurs. You are not yet out of ze woods.”

CHAPTER XXIII

A CANOE TRIP IN THE STARLIGHT

It was Jacques Larue!

The keen-eyed and suspicious French trader had by chance seen Blue Jacket slip away from his people and silently paddle his canoe down the river a short distance. He had followed, and watched him hide the bark here in the rushes bordering the shore.

And of course the trader had no difficulty in guessing what this meant. He knew Blue Jacket intended that the white prisoner should escape by this means.

Why Larue did not go at once to the head men, and tell of his discovery, will never be known. Perhaps he fancied that Sandy would come alone to the boat, and it struck him as a fine chance to frustrate the designs of the boy just when doubtless his heart would beat high with hope.

At any rate here he was, possibly somewhat surprised that three dark figures confronted him instead of one shrinking lad.

“What would you?” demanded Bob, turning quickly around, just as he was in the act of entering the canoe, which was floating among the rushes.

“So, you are zere, too, it seems?” sneered the man. “I remember zere was also ze second Armstrong cub. Zis is vat I call neat. Two new Shawanee boys, adopted into ze tribe! Perhaps ze new Eenglish trader like to exchange hees goods for sons! Sacre! suppose you come back to lodges wiz me. I haf got ze gun pointed straight; and my fingair, it press on ze trigger. You refuse, and pouf! bang, down you go!”

“What! do you mean that you would force us to go back to captivity; and you a white man at that? Shame on you, Jacques Larue! Better paint your face, and stick feathers in your hair; for you are more savage than the reddest Indian!” cried the reckless Sandy.

The trader gave vent to a low cry of anger. Bob feared that the Frenchman might be urged to shoot by these taunts, for he was undoubtedly hot-blooded, like most of his countrymen.

It was surely a time for action. The young pioneer made a sudden lunge forward and struck out with his right arm. Long handling

of the axe had given Bob the muscles of an athlete; and when his clenched fist came in contact with the jaw of the French trader the result was disastrous to Larue.

He went floundering on his back. His gun was discharged; but the missile that it had contained did no more damage than to shoot a hole through the atmosphere, for it was aimed at the time at the sky.

“ Away! ” cried Blue Jacket, pushing Bob toward the boat; for the boy had acted as though tempted to follow up his one blow by giving the insulting trader the whipping he deserved.

Prudence prevailed, and Bob hastened to leap aboard. Then the young Shawanee gave the canoe a shove that sent it out through the rushes, and upon the bosom of the flowing stream.

Jacques Larue struggled to his feet, and wildly pranced up and down on the shore, shouting threats of what he would do if ever he came in contact with either of those Armstrong “ cubs ” again. But Bob gave little heed to what he said, being much more concerned with other matters.

Of course the report of the heavily-charged

gun, together with the cries of the angry French trader, must by this time have aroused the village.

“ I wonder if they will pursue us? ” ventured Sandy, as he worked away valiantly at the paddle which he had taken up.

“ The current of this stream is swift, and the shores so filled with underbrush that we can make faster time than any brave could afoot,” remarked Bob, while he, too, bent to the task before him, so that the little boat fairly danced along on the starlit stream, heading down toward the junction with the big Ohio.

“ But they have other canoes, for I saw three at least? ” ventured Sandy.

“ But Blue Jacket knew that,” returned the other, shrewdly; “ and depend on it he saw to it that they were hidden away where they could not be found in a hurry. We may be pursued, but I am not afraid.”

They could hear some sort of hubbub taking place back toward the place where the village stood. No doubt the greatest confusion ensued when the absence of all the canoes was discovered.

“ I only hope he will not be made to suffer

for what he did," mused Sandy; "because Blue Jacket is our red brother now, and he thinks a heap of you, Bob."

"Yes, and of you, too, Sandy, because he said as much. How nice it has all turned out after all! And it pays, sometimes, brother, just as our mother says, to be kind toward an enemy. If we had let the poor fellow die, think what would be your condition to-night."

Sandy worked for a long time in silence; but he was undoubtedly thinking over the stirring events of the last few hours, and the lesson must have sunk deep into his heart, never to be forgotten.

"I believe we are close to the big river!" remarked Bob, after a time.

"Why, you took the very words out of my mouth," returned Sandy; "for I can see much water ahead, and the waves seem to be getting larger. We must keep to the right, and paddle close to the shore."

Presently they entered upon the vast expanse of the Ohio, and their progress became much slower, since now they were compelled to fight against a strong current, instead of having the benefit of one.

"Jacques Larue seems to be in mortal fear

about father taking his trade away from him," said Sandy, after a time.

"That is because he has been robbing the Indians," observed the thoughtful Bob. "He knows that the English do not trade after that style, but believe in giving more for the pelts. And, brother, I believe that what has happened may assist father very much in his trade. You heard what the chief said — that never would the Shawanees war upon the family of Armstrong. That means they will be our friends, even though at war with the whites."

"The skies seem to be brightening all around," remarked Sandy. "If only the truth would come out about that barn burning! It is the one black blot on our name, and father feels it keenly, though he tries to be so brave. His honor is very dear to him."

"As it should be," cried Sandy. "But mother never loses hope. Does she not constantly say that in God's good time all must be made clear? And I believe that mother knows best. I keep hoping that some fine day we shall have news from our old home in Virginia, and that word will come to tell us father's name is cleared."

They said no more for some time. Indeed,

all of their breath was needed in the violent exertion of forcing the canoe against that current, running six miles or more an hour.

“ Oh! I believe we must be near home now! ” cried Sandy suddenly, pointing with his extended paddle toward the nearby shore. “ See, that bunch of trees on the hill-top looks like the one we can look at from our cabin. Yes, it must be, Bob! Shall we land here, and climb up? ”

“ Ten minutes more ought to do it, brother, ” said the other, quietly. “ So dip deep, and push hard. It is nearly over; and think of the joy of being home again. ”

“ Oh! yes. They must be dreadfully worried after knowing about that fire. How fortunate that it did not sweep this way, ” declared Sandy, between gasps; for he was very nearly done up, not having all the rugged physique of his brother.

“ We have much to be thankful for, ” replied Bob, working away.

When the time set by Bob had expired the canoe was turned toward the shore, and the two landed, securing the frail craft, for they hoped to have many a trip in it on the broad bosom of the mighty Ohio.

After this they mounted the hill. Bob, knowing that there were always sentinels on duty, and not wishing to be fired on by mistake, gave a signal that would be recognized; and presently they were met by one whom they knew well, being ushered by the guard into the settlement.

There was a light burning in the Armstrong cabin, and they could easily understand that sleepless eyes reigned there. As they drew near, the door opened, and the two lads saw a well-known figure appear. It was the anxious mother who stood there, shading her eyes with her hand, for a fire burned near by. She had heard voices that thrilled her soul.

Impulsive Sandy gave a shout and rushed forward, to be crushed to that loving breast, and kissed again and again. Then came the wide-eyed Kate, and the delighted father, to renew the tender caresses.

Neighbors who had been aroused also flocked into the Armstrong cabin, eager to hear of the boys' adventures. So for an hour, or until nearly dawn, they had to relate the strange things that had befallen them since leaving home on that eventful hunt.

Looking around the big room, where the fire

burned so cheerily, and the kettle sang its home-like tune, Sandy heaved a great sigh of happiness.

“It’s just Heaven to be here!” he said; and, while his good mother shook her head in mild reproof at his words, she smiled with pleasure to realize that her boys thought so much of their home, humble though it might be, and devoid of many things others would deem necessities.

After a warm meal the boys were compelled to go to bed, and secure some rest, of which both of them were certainly in sore need. Later on that day, when the full particulars of the captivity were told, David turned to his wife and said:

“Yes, your way was the best way after all, Mary. See how blessed a return that poor wounded and almost dying Shawanee has made. With his life, if need be, he was determined to repay the debt. And to think that they call us *friends*, these red men with whom I expect to do much trading after a while! Son, that was surely the best day’s work you ever did when you bound up the wounds of Blue Jacket, and took him in by our fireside. I will never forget the lesson, wife. Our bread cast upon

the waters *did* return, and that before many days.”

And the gentle Mary only said in reply:

“ Still have faith that the other cloud will yet be lifted in good time, David! ”

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FEATHERED MESSAGE

“ Look up there on the roof of the cabin! What can it be? ”

It was about a week after the return of the two boys from the Shawanee village. During this time they had made several trips into the great forest, and never failed to bring home game, for there seemed a great abundance around the new settlement on the Ohio.

The men had used their keen-edged axes well, and the trees were falling fast. It was even hoped that the small gardens would prove profitable, and that they might have other crops, besides the Indian corn that grew so well in this climate.

The brief visit of Daniel Boone and his comrades had had one natural effect upon the two brothers. They began to copy the frontiersman style of dress, as the best fitted for the life they expected to lead from this time forward.

Moccasins they had already; but now their mother was called upon to fashion for her boys

hunting tunics of tanned buckskin, which in turn were fringed, as had been those worn by Kenton and the others. Besides, covering for their legs was made from the same material, and appeared similarly decorated.

Bob had made a cap for himself out of the well-tanned skins of several raccoons he had trapped, with one of the beautifully marked tails dangling down the back, like that of his hero, Simon Kenton.

Sandy, on his part, had done the same with some skins of gray squirrels, also using the bushy tails to complete the adornment, so that together the Armstrong boys presented a hunter-like appearance by the time these various additions to their wardrobe were completed.

When they appeared in these new outfits both lads felt that they could now begin to call themselves pioneers in earnest.

On this particular day Bob and Sandy had planned a delightful trip up the river in their canoe, seeking new fields for hunting; and looking into the possibilities of the region for the trapping season, that would begin when the leaves were dropping from the trees in October.

It was Sandy who had given utterance to the exclamation with which this chapter opens. Bob had followed him out of the cabin. The sun was just peeping above the wooded hills away off in the east, and they sniffed the early morning air with delight; but one who could read the signs of the weather might have seen something about the coppery hue of that rising orb that showed that the long delayed Spring rains would soon burst upon the country.

Seeing where Sandy was pointing, Bob also looked, and his surprise exceeded that of his younger brother when he saw the object that was sticking in the middle of the sloping roof.

“Why, it is a feathered Indian arrow!” he cried.

“How strange! And what can that be tied to it, Bob?” asked the other.

“Here, boost me up and I will get it; then we can tell all about it,” answered Bob, who did not believe in wasting time in talk when the solution of the mystery was so easy to learn.

So Sandy gave him a hand, and the agile lad quickly gained the low roof; for the new cabin, while commodious, was only one story

high, with a low loft above the living room and just under the roof.

Bob took the arrow from the roof. He seemed to use more or less vigor in order to extract the flint head, showing that it had come down with considerable force after its aerial flight.

“ Oh! I remember now,” said Sandy, suddenly arousing.

“ What?” demanded the other, as he prepared to jump to the ground, holding the feathered missile carefully in one hand.

“ Why,” said Sandy, eagerly, “ something seemed to arouse me just about daybreak. It sounded like a stone thrown against the house. But I thought father was up, and getting the fire ready, so mother could cook breakfast; and I went to sleep again. Bob, that must have been the time the arrow dropped on the roof!”

“ Yes, that was the time,” answered Bob; “ for the one who held the bow could never have seen how to aim in the night, even though there was a moon.”

“ Aim, do you say, brother? Is it possible then he meant to stick that arrow in our roof rather than any other?” demanded Sandy, startled.

“ I surely do believe it. See, here is a mes-

sage fastened to the shaft by little threads drawn from the fibre of cane!" and Bob held up the piece of birch bark, which Sandy now saw contained various rude designs possibly drawn with a sharp-pointed eagle quill, dipped in the juice of the poke berry.

"Blue Jacket!" he exclaimed involuntarily, for suddenly he remembered that other unique message which the young Shawanee warrior had left, at the time he had slipped away from the cabin of the Armstrongs.

"Yes, that is the plainest thing of all," remarked Bob, "for you see here at the end there is what is meant to be the figure of a man, an Indian, too, for he has feathers in his hair; and his jacket is daubed with a blue stain. But what puzzles me is to read these signs. Come, sit down here. Perhaps two heads may prove better than one, and you are quick at such things."

"Oh! if only Pat O'Mara were here now, how quickly he would read it all," said Sandy, screwing up his forehead as he scanned the several lines of strange figures.

"This must mean the sun, all right," remarked Bob, pointing to the first rude representation in the line.

They both turned to look at the king of day as though understanding that the Indian artist meant to call their attention that way.

“ Well,” remarked Sandy, “ the old fellow does look angry this morning. And then the sky all around has a coppery hue. That must mean more dry weather, brother.”

But Bob shook his head. He had seen something more in those queer picture paintings that caught his attention.

“ No, I think you are wrong, Sandy,” he observed slowly. “ See, here is what he surely means for rain pouring down. And further along is what must be the river rushing along, bank-full. I begin to see what it is, brother.”

“ A warning to the white settlers? ” said Sandy quickly.

“ What else can it mean? And look at this figure standing here; what do you make of him? ” asked the other, pointing.

“ Oh! I know! ” cried Sandy, his face lighting up. “ See how he is decked out with all sorts of things, bells and such! And in his hands he holds gourds that contain dried beans, to rattle when he shakes them. Yes,

that must be the old medicine man I told you about. But what has he got to do with the rains? ”

“ Now I understand it all,” declared Bob, with a smile.

“ Then I wish you would tell me,” remarked his brother, “ for to tell the truth I don’t seem able to grasp it.”

“ The old medicine man has been talking again with the Manitou,” said Bob, “ and has learned that the rain will soon come along, making a flood of the river. Perhaps he knows this from some sign, like the angry sun; but he pretends that the information was given to him from the Great Spirit.”

“ And Blue Jacket,” cried Sandy, “ believing all he says, has thought it worth while to come all the way over here, lame as he is, to warn us! That was good of him. He is afraid some of us may be caught napping. But how much better if he had only slipped into the settlement, and talked with us.”

“ But Blue Jacket is an Indian, with all the cunning and caution of the red men,” Bob replied. “ He knows that all palefaces do not think alike; and he feared lest a guard should shoot him on sight. No, I am glad he was wise.

Think how we should grieve if he were killed in our midst.”

“ But about the warning? Shall you tell father, and have him spread the news? ” asked the younger boy.

“ To be sure. It can do no harm, even if it prove to be a false alarm. They will understand the motive that sent Blue Jacket over here again. And, Sandy, perhaps father may want us to give up that long canoe trip we had planned for to-day.”

At that Sandy’s face fell.

“ Oh! I hope not! ” he exclaimed, quickly. “ For I have been looking forward ever so much to exploring that country away to the east, and up the river. Pat told us that on the other shore, above, the game was thicker than any place he knew. We must get off to-day, brother! What if the rain does come, we are neither sugar nor salt, but strong enough to stand much.”

“ Well, perhaps father may not think much of the old medicine man’s belief. And, as you say, surely we are able to take care of ourselves. I am hoping myself that father may not forbid our going,” said Bob.

So Sandy, with an object in view, made it

a point, when they told their father of the strange warning sent by their good friend Blue Jacket, to speak of the medicine man as a great fraud, who was certainly not worth considering.

Whether David was influenced by what he said, or really believed the danger to be over-rated, he did not offer any particular objections to the boys' expedition.

“ Hurrah! ” cried Sandy, as they reached the place where the canoe was hauled up on the sandy beach. “ Now for a jolly paddle up the river, and a visit to that unknown shore over the water, where buffalo and deer are as thick as peas, and asking to be shot. ”

Bob was not as enthusiastic, although doubtless he, too, anticipated more or less pleasure from the excursion. They did not expect to be back that night, unless their plans miscarried; but before another sun had set they meant to at least be on their way homeward.

Soon they were paddling merrily up the river. There was not a cloud overhead, and the sun seemed to give promise of exerting unusual warmth for so early in the season.

“ Poor old medicine man, ” laughed Sandy, as he glanced around at the bright picture, and

then thought of the warning message. "So we are to beware of the river's rising wrath, are we? Seems to be quiet enough just now, brother!"

"Yes," was all that Bob replied; for somehow he seemed to have some foreboding of coming trouble, though he did not want to tell Sandy of this, lest the light-hearted one laugh at his fears, which after all might come to nothing.

About noon they crossed to the other shore. Out in the middle of the river they found that it required considerable muscle to keep the canoe from losing in the fight with the swiftly gliding, though noiseless, current.

They determined not to land just yet. Sandy remembered how Pat O'Mara had told about a certain wonderful cove further up the stream, where they could hide their boat while they hunted. Besides, there was less danger of running across any hostiles the further they went in the direction of Fort Pitt; since after the last great Indian battle the red tribes had retreated westward.

It proved much further than they had been led to believe from what the Irish trapper had said; or else progress against that current was

slower than they had calculated. At any rate, the hour was not far from sunset when they finally sighted the cove that was to be their landing place.

CHAPTER XXV

AFLOAT ON THE FLOOD

“ Now to land! ” cried Sandy, as they turned the head of the canoe toward shore.

“ Less noise, brother, ” whispered Bob; for the impetuous one was forever forgetting that a frontiersman must learn that silence is the price of safety when in the woods where the red man dwells.

“ But why do you keep looking up at the sky so much? ” went on Sandy. “ Just because it has clouded up, is no sign it will rain. Have we not heard that all signs fail in dry weather? And, even if that old humbug of a medicine man pretends he has had it direct from Manitou, I see no reason for being alarmed. Let it rain if it chooses. We can hunt in wet clothes as well as in dry. ”

“ Surely, ” replied Bob, pretending to throw aside his doubts, for he saw no reason why Sandy should share them; if trouble came they would know how to meet it.

So they landed in the snug little cove.

“ Shall we stake the canoe out here in the rushes? ” asked Sandy.

“ Not this time,” replied Bob. “ Take hold, and we will carry it up to that clump of bushes yonder. It can lie there safe until we come again.”

“ Oh! ” laughed Sandy, “ I see you still believe the river will rise suddenly, and threaten to carry off our only means of getting home! ”

“ Who knows? ” replied the other, quite unmoved by the accusation; “ and, if it did come, we would be very glad that we had taken time by the forelock. Besides, it is not much further.”

Having secreted the boat and both paddles, they concluded to go some little way back, to camp for the night.

“ We must do what Pat says all borderers do when in the enemy’s country — make a very small fire to cook with, and hide that so that not even the keenest eye could discover it,” observed Bob, as they walked on through the forest, both on the watch for game of any sort.

“ Well, it will be highly amusing, at least,” admitted Sandy; “ though, unless we are lucky enough to run across game very soon,

we shall have to make our supper off that dried venison; and that I do not like.”

“ Hist! ”

Bob suddenly caught the sleeve of his brother's hunting shirt. Following the direction in which the other seemed to be looking, Sandy caught a glimpse of some moving object to leeward.

“ A buffalo! Two, *three* of them! Oh! Bob, what a chance! ” he gasped.

The other drew him down instantly, so that the bushes screened them.

“ Now let us crawl up as close as we dare. When we get within good gunshot we will both fire at the same time, ” he whispered in the ear of his companion.

Bob, as usual, seemed perfectly calm, while of course the younger boy was fairly quivering with eagerness. Still, this would not prevent Sandy from giving a good account of himself when the time came to shoot, for he always fired off-hand at any rate, rather than by long sight, as some marksmen do.

It was fortunate that the wind, what little seemed to be stirring through the forest just then, was coming from the feeding buffalo, and toward the hunters. This prevented the sus-

picious animals from scenting their human enemies.

The boys made fair progress, taking advantage of clumps of bushes, trunks of trees, and fallen timber.

“Slower,” whispered Bob in his brother’s ear. “They are getting uneasy. Notice how often that old bull throws up his head and sniffs the air? He trots away, only to come back again to his family. Now, again forward. This log will give us a good boost, I think.”

“We don’t want the old bull,” Sandy managed to say in the other’s ear.

“Hardly. He’d be too tough eating. You take the half-grown calf, and leave the cow to me,” said the older hunter; and then made a gesture that prohibited further communications.

Presently Bob realized that they had crept as close as seemed necessary.

He caught the eye of Sandy, and nodded his head. Knowing what the programme was to be, for they had gone through it many times together, the other gradually managed to raise himself to a position where he had one knee on the ground. This was an ideal position for shooting, as it gave him a chance to rest his

elbow on the other knee, to steady himself at the final instant.

To Bob it was given to pick the time of firing. He had to watch closely, in order to make sure that both animals selected were free from trees, so that they might not uselessly waste precious ammunition.

“ Shoot! ” he said, quickly.

Bang! roared his own heavily-charged musket. The cow went floundering down, and never again arose, for Bob's aim had been true.

Sandy was not quite so fortunate. Just at the second when Bob gave the word to fire, the half-grown young buffalo chanced to step behind a large tree trunk, so that it was out of the question to dispose of him while standing still.

With the report the alarmed animals started to run wildly away. But Sandy had of course been expecting this, and was quick to shoot.

He gave a shout as he saw the prize fall. Bob, on his part, was a little worried lest the bull charge them; but that old worthy was already in full flight, doubtless in the belief that the others of his family would rejoin him, when their little fright, concerning those light-

ning flashes and thunder crashes coming from the bushes, had died away.

Here was great luck truly. All the game they could possibly carry home, and within carrying distance of the spot where the canoe had been secreted.

They made camp at once. There was no tent to erect, so when Bob had removed the two hides, a laborious task even with Sandy's help, and started to cut the carcasses up, Sandy erected a lean-to of branches, bark and leaves, that would serve fairly well in case it did rain. Then came a little fire, built as Bob directed, in a cavity, where its light would never be seen beyond ten paces.

After that supper was begun. And some of the meat from the young buffalo bull proved most tender eating.

“Hark!” said Bob, as they were browning their fourth helping at the end of long wooden splinters thrust into the ground near the little mass of red embers.

Sandy made an involuntary dive for his gun, as he ejaculated:

“What did you hear? Was it the whoop of an Indian? Have they discovered us after all?”

“ It has begun to rain, that is all,” answered Bob, smiling; for he had heard the first drops beginning to patter among the dead leaves.

“ Is that all? Why, it is hardly worth mentioning. And you did give me a start, to be sure. I’m glad we finished our supper before those clouds took to leaking.”

It seemed a trifling thing just then; but in the end it was freighted with momentous happenings connected with the fortunes of those two young pioneers of the Ohio.

Presently the rain was coming down hard, so that the two lads were only too glad to crawl under the shelter that had been built.

In less than an hour Sandy was bemoaning the fact that he had not, while he was about it, made the wattled roofing twice as thick, as it would have shed the rain to better advantage.

That was certainly a night they would not soon forget; and of course it was Sandy who complained the most, for Bob could take his punishment in grim silence, Indian fashion.

“ When morning comes, we must try to get home!” declared the younger pioneer, as he crouched there and shivered.

“ We are so wet now that nothing could make us feel any worse,” declared Bob. “ I

am going to try to weave a heavier roof, for the night is hardly half over.”

“ A good idea,” echoed Sandy.

They set to work; and by the time an hour had gone by, were able to keep the furious rain from beating in on their guns.

Sleep was entirely out of the question, and they could only sit there exchanging a few words to cheer one another up, and praying for the morning to come.

It seemed never to dawn, and Sandy really began to declare that it was three nights wrapped in one, when his brother called his attention to a faint gray light in the east.

The rain was still falling in sheets, so that the prospect looked poor indeed. Again was the voice of Sandy heard, lamenting the fact that in all likelihood they must go without any breakfast, which, in the eyes of a growing and always hungry boy, was next door to a crime.

“ Perhaps not,” said Bob; “ just wait until the day has really come, when we can see around. Surely there must be dead trees somewhere close by; and you know how dry the heart keeps. We have tinder, and we will have a fire yet.”

That promise sustained Sandy, for he could

never remember when Bob gave his word without keeping it. Nor was it broken in the present instance. The rain never gave the slightest sign of stopping, although it must have deluged the headquarters of the great Ohio, and caused the river to rise many feet an hour. But Bob sallied forth, scorning the wet, to return presently, staggering under a load of fuel of a resinous nature, and calculated to burn, despite the storm.

And it did; for soon, when the expert had applied his flint and steel to the dry tinder, in the midst of which a little powder had been dropped, the fire started, and in half an hour its genial heat did much to chase away the blues.

It had been built close enough to their shelter so that the boys could sit and cook pieces of tender buffalo meat on the end of their reeds. And for perhaps upward of two hours they amused themselves in this fashion.

“ Now I feel able to carry my share of the game down to the boat, if you say the word,” announced Sandy. “ And, as I live, I believe the rain does not come quite as heavily as before. Let us be on the move! ”

Bob was not quite so sure that there would

be any break in the storm; but on the whole he could not hold back. Surely the river would continue to rise for days after such a cloudburst; and unless they crossed soon they must stay on the opposite shore a week, perhaps two.

When they reached the bushes where the canoe had been hidden, the craft was found just as they had left it.

“ We had better tie the packages of meat and our guns inside the canoe,” said long-headed Bob; “ for then, if we happen to be upset, they will not be lost.”

“ A good idea,” replied his brother. “ But I hope we are not so unlucky as to be turned over out there,” and he cast an apprehensive look upon the rushing surface of the flooded Ohio.

Neither of the lads had had any experience in such an emergency; nor could they be expected to realize the terrible power that current possessed. It ran smoothly, and without any churning, but, once within its grip, it would require muscles of steel to guide a boat like the skin canoe belonging to Blue Jacket.

It was already nearly noon. The sky was leaden, and the rain constantly falling. Surely the old medicine man of the Shawanees was

for once having his prophecy bountifully fulfilled.

It was with considerable misgivings that Bob, yielding to the importunities of his impulsive brother, decided to enter the frail canoe and start to cross that churning flood toward the other shore. Sandy had artfully mentioned the fact that the little mother would be anxious about their safety.

“ And,” he had continued, “ we can be heading toward the other bank all the time, even if the current does carry us downstream at a furious rate.”

They had not gone a quarter of the way across before Bob knew they had made a big mistake. For the little boat was a mere plaything in the grasp of the furious current. They could make progress neither one way nor the other. All the while they were being swept along with the speed of a mill-race, held fast in that overpowering grip of the flood!

CHAPTER XXVI

THE SINKING CRAFT

“ THIS looks bad! ” said Bob.

He had to raise his voice much above the ordinary, for out there on the river the rushing water did not seem so silent as the boys had believed when ashore; and all around them could be heard the boiling of the flood. Tree trunks floated around them in all directions, showing what an unusual thing this sudden rise of the river must be. There was constant danger lest one of these tremendous snags sink the delicate little skin boat; and often the boys had to use their paddles like mad to prevent such a catastrophe from happening.

And once, even a more singular peril threatened them. It was Sandy who made the discovery, shortly after Bob had uttered the remark given above.

“ Oh! look yonder, brother; whatever can that be, perched up in that tree-top? It moved then, and we are getting closer to it all the while! ” he exclaimed.

Bob needed only one look to tell him the nature of the object.

“It is a panther, Sandy,” he said, quickly, and with a shake of his head. “A big cat of the wilderness; and, as Colonel Boone said, the thing most to be feared in all the forest, for it jumps on the hunter from behind. See his sleek gray sides? And notice how he swings his long tail back and forth? I do not think we want to get any closer to the gentleman, do you, Sandy?”

“See him crouch, Bob!” cried the other boy, in alarm. “Do you think he means to jump for the boat? What if he did, and upset us out here? That would be terrible! Let us shout together, and scare him, if we can!”

They did so, at the same time working feverishly to urge the boat further away from the drifting tree-top, which had come to be the refuge of the wood’s terror.

Bob cast an apprehensive eye at the distance separating them. Could the animal clear it, if he decided to jump? Would he dream of changing his base in the hope of bettering his condition?

In fact, Bob was just considering whether it would not be wiser for him to rely on his gun,

if the priming could be renewed in time, rather than in the hope of leaving the beast in the lurch, when Sandy cried out gleefully:

“ We’re gaining, Bob! Keep paddling like mad, and we shall make it. Already he hesitates, and dares not try! A strong pull, a long pull, and a pull all together now. Hurrah! who cares? ”

It was hard to quench that lad’s spirit. And somehow, even in such a moment of alarm, his buoyant courage did much to renew Bob’s sinking hopes.

By increasing their pace, already incredibly swift, down the stream, they had managed to leave the panther and his tree-top in the lurch. There was no longer anything to be feared from that source.

“ Are we making any progress at all? ” asked Sandy, who was pretty well exhausted from his exertions.

“ In one direction, yes; but toward the home shore I’m afraid not at all,” was Bob’s frank reply.

“ But what shall we do? ” cried the younger boy, in rapidly growing alarm; for by now the situation was beginning to impress even his buoyant nature. “ We can never keep on like

this all day, for the river grows constantly wider, and the flood stronger. Besides, Bob, I'm afraid the canoe is beginning to leak!"

Now, Bob had known that terrible fact for some little time, but hesitated to tell his brother, feeling sure that nothing they could do would mend matters.

"I have been thinking, Sandy; and there seems only one chance for us now," he said, trying to look ahead down the river.

"Oh! I hope you don't mean that we will have to swim for it!" cried the other, aghast at the idea of finding himself buffeting the flood, with either shore far away.

"No, I hope that may not come — yet a while, at least. But I was thinking of the island!" said Bob.

"The island! Oh! how did I come to forget that?" shouted Sandy, immediately beginning to show signs of new ambition. "Yes, that is it, Bob! We must try to land on the island, if it is still above water."

"Oh!" declared Bob, quickly, "part of it must be, for you remember it had quite a little hill on it."

"Yes, yes, for I spoke about the splendid tree that crowned the top, and said how I would

like to own a cabin up under its shelter. But perhaps we have gone past the island! That would be terrible, wouldn't it, Bob?"

"Surely. But I am positive that is not true. I am looking to see it at any moment now. And, Sandy, just as soon as it comes into view, we must paddle like everything to make it. Once we fly past, and it is all over with us!"

The two castaways looked at each other, and each set his teeth with a determination to do wonders should the occasion call for it.

"Do you suppose we are anywhere on a line with the island?" asked Sandy, a new fear taking possession of him.

Bob shook his head.

"I don't know. It is impossible to tell anything in all this noise and confusion. But I think so; I hope so," he replied.

Both now settled down to watching the watery vista that stretched beyond. The wind was driving the rain out there on the river, so that at times a curtain seemed to be raised before them, only to fade away as the rain again held up for a brief interval.

Bob cast an occasional glance full of apprehension down at the water that was coming into the canoe. He knew that the leak must

be growing, slowly but surely. Could they manage to make land before the boat filled and sank under them?

“ There! I saw the island, I am sure! ” cried Sandy, in a ringing tone. “ But the rain has come back, and it is hidden again, ” he added in disgust.

“ Which way? ” shouted Bob.

“ Over to the right! We must be just a little too far out! ” replied Sandy.

“ Then let us get to work! Head in toward the shore we have left, and do your very hardest, boy! ” cried Bob.

Both of the lads dipped the paddles deeply. As before, they found that it required a giant's strength to accomplish anything worth while when pitted against that tremendous energy contained in the swift-moving flood.

Fortunately Sandy had recuperated in the brief time he had rested from his efforts, so that he was able to do himself credit now, when so much depended on changing their location.

The bare thought of missing the friendly island, and being carried on down that raging torrent, possibly to meet death somewhere below, was enough to make any one, even more tired than Sandy, swing his blade with a vim.

“ Oh! we can never do it, Bob! ” he gasped.

“ Never say die! Keep at it, I tell you! It is our only chance! ” was what came back from the other wielder of the spruce paddle.

The island could now be plainly seen. It did not look so large by half as when they had seen it on going up the river; but the more elevated parts were standing well out of the flood. On the upper end was a mass of accumulated debris in the shape of stranded trees and logs.

Poor Sandy looked, and a groan burst from his lips, for he feared they would not be able to overcome the current sufficiently to bring their little craft close enough to that friendly shore to enable them to land!

And Bob, who clung so desperately to hope, knew that there was absolutely no chance for them to reach a landing spot at the upper end, even if they had wanted to mix up with all that mass of interlocked trees.

He had grasped the situation in a comprehensive way, and sized it up.

The island was narrow, but somewhat lengthy. Of course the current ran like a mill-race along the shore. But Bob knew that below, where the two opposite tides met once

more, there was bound to be somewhat of a reaction. Here a little backward swirl would be found, a sort of undertow, bearing upstream toward the foot of the island.

It would only extend for a limited distance. Once they got beyond that drawback, and there was absolutely no hope of making land!

And that was the one thing he had in mind when he sang out so encouragingly to his weaker brother:

“ It is our only chance! ”

Sandy was paddling with all his nerve, but not making a very great success of the effort. In fact, he was so winded that he hardly knew when he dipped his blade in the yeasty water, or drew it quaveringly toward him.

Still, he was game, and would not give up so long as he could move a hand. What little he could do to help might not stand for much, but every bit helped, and even in his great distress Sandy realized this.

He could see his brother fighting like mad to swerve the boat still further toward that shore, now so very close. It did not seem possible that Bob could be equal to the slightest additional call upon his reserve forces.

Now they had actually reached the upper

end of the island, and were commencing to speed along its length.

A minute or so more, and they would know their fate. Everything seemed to depend on that last turn, when the canoe arrived at the junction of the two currents, just below the foot of the haven of safety.

“ On the outer side — change over and help me! ” shouted Bob, knowing that the critical moment was at hand.

Sandy started hastily to obey, jumping at conclusions. But once more his nervousness played him a scurvy trick.

“ Oh! it is gone! ” Bob heard him shriek suddenly, and, glancing up, the elder brother saw what had happened. The fierce sweep of the current had snatched the paddle from Sandy's weakened hand, and it was already floating far beyond his reach!

CHAPTER XXVII

BOB

THE situation had suddenly grown more desperate.

Deprived of what assistance Sandy might have given him, Bob must shoulder the entire burden. Perhaps the other had not been doing much, but his weak efforts must surely have helped a little.

Bob instinctively moved back. This would give him greater power to swing the head of the dancing canoe toward the objective point; for the paddler in the stern usually commands the course of the boat better than his comrade placed in the bow, though the latter guards against collisions, where rocks or stumps abound.

The time was so frightfully short that whatever was done had to be carried out by sheer instinct, rather than reasoning.

Sandy, utterly exhausted, and with his poor heart almost broken because of this new catastrophe which could be laid to his eager clum-

siness, had dropped back in the bottom of the canoe. Here he lay in several inches of water, so discouraged that he was for the moment utterly unmindful of what was going on around him.

Of course he knew that Bob was working like a frantic being to push the wavering bow just a little closer to the shore they were so rapidly skirting. But it was all useless. His blunder had spoiled their last hope, and now nothing remained but to take what came.

How wonderful it was to see how Bob arose to the occasion. His arms were working like flails in the hands of a thresher of grain. They sped backward and forward with a momentum that fairly bewildered the eyes of Sandy.

But alas! there was one stupendous drawback, one thing that seemed fated to undo all this splendid work which his gallant brother was putting into play. Sandy saw, and groaned in spirit; for that was where he might have saved the day had he not lost his grip on his paddle when the hungry waves snatched at it.

It was the lost motion that would ruin them. Fast though Bob was making his apparently tireless arms move, he could not keep up a constant movement. And between his strokes

that ceaseless current would undo nearly every bit of good that had been accomplished by his efforts.

Had Sandy been able to insert his blade between, he might have held the canoe to what had been gained. And each time Bob would have won more and more inches.

And yet, despite this serious handicap, Bob was actually doing wonders. Surely they did not seem to be quite so far away from the shore as when they first came abreast of the long island!

Sandy awoke to the fact that perhaps after all there *was* a glimmer of hope.

“ Oh! if you only can, Bob!” he cried, bestirring himself.

Was there anything he could do to help? He thought of leaning over the side of the canoe, and using his poor hands to dash at the water, on whose swiftly moving bosom they were being swept along.

Useless, worse than useless, for in so doing he might only serve to weaken Bob's furious efforts, by shaking the frail and almost sinking boat.

His gun — could he not do something with the broad shoulder butt to urge the canoe

around? Sandy was a creature of impulse. He seldom waited to give a second thought to anything, once it found lodgment in his brain.

So he made a swoop forward, snatching the musket from the place where it had been fastened before the voyage was begun. The cord held, but with a second fierce jerk he broke it.

Then, with a shout in which new hope had a part, Sandy dipped the stock of the old gun deep in the river, and swept it around toward the stern.

Bob realized what he was doing. He could not look around, of course, since each second was priceless just then. Perhaps he understood from some trifling change in the movement of the canoe, when he drew his dripping blade out for another mad plunge, that a new element had taken hold.

And it may have even spurred the brave lad to doing better than before, if such a thing could be.

They were now rapidly approaching the lower end of the island. Bob's eyes were fastened eagerly on that point. The rain had ceased temporarily, and he could see plainly. How he wished he had examined the cross cur-

rents there more closely at the time they were leisurely paddling up stream!

There would only be time for about a dozen more quick energetic dips of the paddle. He must make each one tell. After that a great deal would depend on fortune whether they reached that line of foam which marked the edge of the drawback. If they could only attain a lodgment within that charmed half circle, he believed it would be possible to gain the land.

Sandy was working again with feverish anxiety to undo the harm his mistake had wrought.

The newly awakened hope gave him a fictitious strength, and, while the stock of an old flint-lock musket may not be the finest sort of a paddle in the world, there might be things much worse.

Sandy knew they had a chance! He could see the head of the canoe, water-logged though the craft was at the time, and slow to respond to their efforts, turning toward the land, inch by inch.

Yes, surely they were going to make it! If only Bob could keep up his strenuous work a dozen seconds longer all must be well. Once they reached the border of the cross currents,

the tug would be relieved wonderfully, and they could urge their unwieldy craft into a harbor!

He knew Bob would rise to the occasion. He could see him settling himself as if to let loose the very last atom of reserve strength there might lurk in his system. Gallant Bob! was his like ever known among the young pioneers of the West? Nothing seemed able to crush his hopeful and determined spirit. What a brother to have; and how Sandy's whole soul seemed to go out to him in that dreadful moment, when their lives hung trembling in the balance!

Trust him for keeping a tight grip on his invaluable blade. There could never happen to wise Bob the same disaster that had overwhelmed Sandy with confusion.

Three of the needed half-dozen sweeps had already been given. And the result seemed to be all that might have been expected, so that Sandy's hopes rose higher with each stroke.

They were gaining — they would make the ripple, and be saved from the horrors that lay further down that swollen stream!

And just when Sandy was about to burst out into a shout of joy, if his spent breath would

allow of such a thing, he was suddenly plunged back again into the pit of despair.

For there was an ominous sharp crack, a cry from Bob, and he held up the stump of his broken paddle. It had failed him at the critical moment!

Poor Sandy collapsed when he saw this sight. He dropped his now useless gun in the bottom of the canoe, and cowered there, shutting out the terrible sight of the island slipping past by covering his eyes with his hands.

It had been so nearly accomplished that the catastrophe seemed all the more keen, and he could not bear to look at the receding haven which they had hoped to make their refuge.

Of course now the canoe would be wholly in the power of the victorious current, which must carry it onward like a chip, until shortly the incoming water would attain such a level as to sink the craft. Then — but Sandy could not allow himself to picture what would happen when he and his brother were forced to battle with the cruel giants contained in those leaping waves.

But what was this? Surely there was a jerking motion to the craft that had been missing after Bob's ill-fated paddle broke!

Sandy wonderingly uncovered his eyes. He stared in dismay. Why, where was Bob? The place where he had set while working like a hero was deserted! Had he seen the folly of further resistance, and thrown himself over the side, welcoming the fate that seemed so certain?

Sandy half started up, cold with fear. The boat was still heading toward that end of the island, so close that he could easily have tossed a biscuit on the nearest bushes, half under water now!

Some unseen influence was evidently urging the canoe along its course, just as though a friendly giant, concealed from view under the rushing, tumultuous waters, had decided at the last instant to give the adventurous boys a parting chance.

Then all at once the truth flashed over him. Why, to be sure, it was Bob! He had refused to be utterly cast down by the sudden reverse that snatched away his valuable paddle by snapping it in half. He had instantly plunged over the side of the boat. He was in the water, gripping the hesitating canoe, and striving with all his power to urge it into peaceful waters!

So Sandy again snatched up his abandoned gun, and, dipping the stock deep in the river's foam, strove to add what little assistance he could to the gallant efforts of the boy who would not give in.

Inch by inch they began to win out. Sandy's heart seemed to be in his mouth during that critical period, when the boat actually balanced between two courses. Then, as though Bob had given a last tremendous lunge, it selected the easier alternative, and headed for the point of the island!

CHAPTER XXVIII

A RESCUE

“ OVERBOARD with you, and help! ”

“ Yes, yes, Bob; I’m coming! ”

Sandy seemed to be given a new lease of life. Hope brought fresh powers of endurance. Without an instant’s delay he slid over the end of the canoe, and into the flood.

He was a swimmer, like every young pioneer who went into the wilderness with his people; and, as soon as Sandy put his shoulder to the now-lightened canoe, why of course its progress toward the near-by point of land was considerably quickened.

It was all right! They could count on being able to make land, where the boat might be repaired, and their own flagging energies restored, ere they again breasted the swollen stream in the effort to reach the home shore.

Now they could touch bottom with their feet. After that it was easy; so that soon the boat was dragged up on the land, safe from the swirling waters.

Sandy tried to give a shout to signify how glad he felt; but there was not breath enough left in his lungs. All he could do was to sink down on the friendly shore, and pant like a winded deer.

Bob followed suit. He was as exhausted as his brother; for his recent efforts had been simply tremendous. And, as he lay on the shore, there must have come to his heart that warm glow so natural to victory, when one has fought the good fight, and won.

But not for long did Bob stay there on the ground. He knew that there was much to be done, since they were soaked to the skin, and shivering. Besides, the canoe must be emptied of the water it contained and dragged up higher; for no one could say to what limit the flood might attain ere it began to fall.

And Sandy, seeing his intention, also dragged his weary frame erect.

“What ought we do first?” he asked.

“Take hold, and we will empty out the canoe. Then let us try to make some sort of shelter from the rain; after which a fire would be the next best thing.”

Sandy worked hard. He was cold, and his teeth rattled together in spite of the great

gratitude that filled his heart over their almost miraculous preservation. The sooner they got that campfire started, the better for them both.

He went to work as on the other occasion, at the time they were preparing against the coming of this storm. Only now he had to accept just such substitutes as the island afforded.

Fortunately it was wooded, so that they need not lack for material. Some of the rocks offered a chance to build up side walls, over which the roof might slope, to shed the rain that was still coming down.

It took time to accomplish all this, but promised to repay their efforts. When the shelter was in a fair way toward being finished, Bob set to work starting a fire. Luckily he kept his tinder in a little waterproof box, held within his bag; and it had not suffered from his immersion in the river.

An adept with flint and steel, he quickly had the sparks flying, and a blaze began to spring up. This was fed with bits of dry wood, torn from the heart of a partly-dead tree, until there was enough fire to seize upon anything offered in the way of fuel.

“How good that feels!” declared the shiv-

ering Sandy, holding out his hands toward the leaping flames.

“ I agree with you,” answered Bob, smiling just as of yore, as if the terrible events of the last half hour were only a dream.

They cowered there under their shelter while their garments steamed in the now genial heat. With every passing minute both boys were feeling better. Sandy even began to cast covetous glances toward the buffalo meat, which was lying close at hand, as though his customary appetite had once more started to let him know growing boys must be often fed.

Seeing this, Bob nodded his head. He was feeling drowsy, for the natural reaction after his recent tremendous exertions had set in; and this was augmented by the delicious warmth of the fine fire.

So Sandy started to find a lot of reeds that would answer for toasting forks, on which bits of meat could be brought to a delightful stage when placed close to the blaze.

“ It’s stopped raining, Bob!” he declared, as he returned after his foraging expedition with all the reeds needed.

“ I hope that is the end of it,” declared the other, though he poked his head out from his

shelter and surveyed the lowering heavens doubtfully.

“Where do you think all this water is coming from?” asked Sandy, looking across the broad river to the shore where, further down, the new settlement stood; and no doubt wondering how they were ever going to cross that raging flood that was carrying hundreds of trees on its bosom.

“Oh, you forget that two rivers flow into this at Fort Pitt. Besides, there are other streams, all bank-full. It has been a terrible rain. Never in Virginia did we ever see anything like it.”

“How fortunate that there are hills all along the Ohio, where the flood cannot reach. No wonder Colonel Boone warned us never to build our cabins low down to the edge of the water. Why, Bob, just think what would have happened now had we foolishly done so!”

“Yes,” remarked the other, as he cut off several pieces of meat to toast at the end of the reeds Sandy had tossed him. “After this, perhaps some one I know will have more respect for the simple old medicine man who foretold just this flood. How about that, Sandy?”

“He knew, sure enough,” admitted the other, readily; “but just as you said, I believe he guessed what was coming from the looks of the sky. The longer it held off the worse it would be when it arrived. Say, this is what I call comfort, Bob. Think what a difference between our present condition, and when we were fighting for our lives out yonder,” and Sandy shuddered as he cast a quick glance toward the spot where the two currents clashed after skirting the length of the island.

After a while they were able to begin eating. Perhaps there might have seemed a sameness about this fare to a modern boy; but these hardy pioneer lads never dreamed of complaining. Indeed, their hearts were now filled with thanksgiving over their recent miraculous escape, and there was no room for regrets. Besides, they were not used to luxuries in those days.

Sandy was drawing a long breath, as though really unable to finish all the food he had cooked, when he saw his brother start up. Bob was holding his head in a listening attitude.

“What did you think you heard?” exclaimed the other, in alarm.

“I must have been mistaken,” said Bob,

smiling; "for it would be next to impossible for any one to be out here on this island right now."

"But did you think you heard some one call?" persisted Sandy.

"Yes, it sounded like a shout. But no doubt it was some hawk that has found shelter, like ourselves, on the island. If we watch we will likely see him fly away, now that the rain has stopped."

Bob had hardly spoken when both brothers half sprang to their feet.

"It was a cry for help!" exclaimed Sandy, looking at his brother, as usual expecting Bob to take the initiative in the emergency.

"Some one is in trouble!" said the other, "and it is up to us to see if we can do anything for him. Remember how we would have been crazy with joy had there been a helping hand held out when all seemed lost!"

"There it comes again! And from the same place! Whoever it is, he cannot be going past the island."

"No," cried Bob, "I think he must have been thrown ashore among all that trash at the upper end, and, unable to help himself, is in danger of drowning there, caught in the piled

up tree-tops. Come, we must get there and lend a hand."

"It may be an Indian, and a hostile," reminded Sandy.

"I do not think so, for the shout seemed to call for 'help!' But even if it is an Indian, surely you have reason for knowing that all Indians are not cruel and merciless. Remember the gratitude of Blue Jacket. Come, Sandy!"

Bob hardly needed to say all this, for Sandy would not have held back. Together they made their way along the shore. It was not easy travelling, for the bushes grew thickly and interfered with their passage; but Bob led the way, and, accustomed to pushing through the woods, he surmounted all difficulties, Sandy coming close at his heels.

In this fashion they finally came to the head of the island, where the floating trunks of dead trees, some with branches, too, formed a sort of barrier, which the force of the flood had swept up on the point.

"There, look yonder, Bob! I see him!" cried Sandy, the instant they arrived.

There was indeed a clinging figure out amid that mass of floating timber. The unknown

seemed to be endeavoring to crawl through the network surrounding him; but his strength had apparently reached its last notch.

Bob never hesitated, but started out over the logs. Now and then he had to exercise considerable care lest he slip, and once more plunge into the roaring flood.

“Stand where you are, Sandy,” he called to his brother, who had followed him. “Be ready to help when I give the word. I think I can get hold of him, and slew him around to you. Take care, and keep your footing!”

Evidently Bob knew just how to carry out his hastily-arranged plan, for in a brief time he had gripped the unknown by the arm, and was hauling him out of and over the wreckage that surrounded him.

So by slow degrees they managed between them all to get ashore. Here the man collapsed. He was no doubt overcome by the joyful sense of safety, when he had apparently given himself up for lost.

“We must get him down to our little camp,” said Bob, as he looked at the exhausted man.

“Who can he be?” questioned Sandy; for the bearded white face was totally unfamiliar to either of them.

“ I do not know. Take hold of his feet, while I try to hold his shoulders. Between us we can carry him, step by step.”

They had made a passage in going up, and it would have been easier returning had they not been burdened with the senseless stranger; but, by resting frequently, the two boys finally managed to attain their end, and the man was laid alongside the fire.

They started to rub the hands of the sufferer, to restore circulation, for he was evidently chilled to the bone, as well as utterly exhausted.

No doubt the genial warmth of the fire had considerable to do with it; but the efforts of the boys counted as something, and presently they were rewarded by seeing the man's eyes open.

“ He's alive, Bob! We're going to bring him around all right! ” exclaimed Sandy.

In five minutes the man could lie there and hold out his trembling hands to the fire. In ten he was sitting up, gnawing hungrily at a piece of roasted meat Sandy had handed him, as though he knew that in this way he would regain some of that strength which he had lost when engulfed in the flood.

And sitting there, watching him curiously,

the two lads never once suspected how again their lucky star was in the ascendent; and that in saving this stranger from a watery grave they were bringing happiness home to those they loved so dearly.

CHAPTER XXIX

WONDERFUL TIDINGS

THE man was so weak that presently he sank back and seemed to sleep.

“ Is he going to die? ” asked Sandy, alarmed at his looks.

“ Not just now,” replied his brother, shaking his head as he spoke. “ You felt that heat of the fire yourself; and you see it has sent him to sleep. Here, cover him with my blanket. It is dry now, and will keep him warm.”

Leaving the stranger, who as yet had not spoken a word, the boys turned their attention to the leaky canoe. They knew how the Indians managed to stop any such openings in their light boats, made of birch bark or buffalo hides; and Bob had been wise enough to carry along some of the necessary pitch when starting out on this journey of exploration.

“ Do you ever forget anything? ” demanded Sandy, when he saw his brother produce the

needed material for mending their boat, and start heating it over the fire.

“ Oh! yes, often,” replied Bob, cheerfully; for he knew his own faults, even if Sandy refused to see them. “ And it was possible that we would run on a snag that would punch a hole in the boat; so I came prepared to mend it.”

The boat had been carried near the fire some time before, in order that it might dry out. When the conditions were right Bob set to work. He had asked Blue Jacket many questions regarding repairing canoes, when the young Shawanee brave was a guest under the Armstrong roof; and what he had learned proved of considerable value to him now.

“ How will it hold? ” asked Sandy, who was hovering near, eager to lend a hand if his brother needed help.

“ I think it will be stronger than ever,” came the reply.

“ That was always a weak spot, I remember. Once, I thought my foot was going to break through,” declared Sandy, reminiscently.

“ Just as you say. I noticed it myself, and that was one mistake I made. I should have put this patch on before we started on our trip,” and Bob stood back to survey his work.

“ Well,” remarked the younger lad, as his eyes went out over that tumbling flood, on which the trees were swiftly passing in procession, “ we will need a good stout boat if we hope to get over there. Do you think we can manage it, Bob? I’d be willing to take some chances rather than stay here a week, perhaps two, and have mother crying her eyes out for us the while.”

“ I see no reason why we shouldn’t make it,” came Bob’s reply. “ The current heads toward our shore. Besides, with three to paddle, we should be able, foot by foot, to get over. And when we once leave the middle of the river it will not be so bad.”

“ Three! Then you expect that our new friend will be able to help out? ” and Sandy glanced toward the sleeping stranger.

“ Surely. After he wakes up he will be stronger. And he does not look like one who would shirk. He must have struggled hard to reach that place where we found him. Perhaps he saw our fire through the trees, or heard you shout. That was what made him cry out.”

Bob had picked up a hatchet as he spoke, and started to move off.

“Let me cut some more fuel,” objected Sandy, as he tried to take the tool from the other’s hands.

“It isn’t that,” said Bob. “I am going to look for a piece of wood that can be chopped into new paddles. We need three of them, you see, and it is going to be a long job to fashion them, with only a hatchet and a jackknife to work with.”

“Then I will go along. Perhaps two pair of eyes may be better than one in looking for the spruce pine,” declared the younger brother, eagerly.

And so it proved, for Sandy was the one to discover the tree they sought. Bob could figure just how the paddles might be hewn out, and he attacked the tree in a spirited way that soon encompassed its fall.

When he tired, Sandy took a turn; and in this fashion they finally had three pieces, in the rough, which Bob declared would make very good paddles. And by slow degrees the first one was shaped until it only needed whittling with a knife to complete the job.

“That seems all right,” declared Sandy, as he proceeded to try the blade; “and I give you my word that it is far stronger than either

of the ones we lost. I mean to fasten my paddle, this time, to my wrist with a bit of buckskin thong, and then, even if I lose my grip, it will never get away."

"A clever idea," answered Bob, pausing in his work to wipe his brow, and smile at his brother; "and it will pay us all to do the same. Was it not father who told us how an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure? And once a paddle gets caught in the clutch of that river it can never be recovered again."

"See!" exclaimed Sandy, "our friend is stirring! He is sitting up, and staring around him. I think he can hardly understand where he is, and how he came to cheat the river of a grave. Now he sees us, and smiles. Bob, there is something I like about that man, stranger though he is. I seem to feel that he is a friend, and that we will always be glad we rescued him to-day."

"I am sure of that. There, the second paddle is about done. I am tired of the work, so let us go over to make the acquaintance of our guest. He is beckoning to us," and Bob dropped his hatchet to obey the summons.

The stranger held out both hands, while his bearded face lighted up with a smile that, as Sandy had said, was very winning.

“How can I ever thank you, boys, for what you have done?” he said, as he pressed a hand of each. “But for you I should have passed over to the other side.”

“Please do not say anything more,” replied Bob, who could not bear to be praised for simply doing his duty. “Who may you be, and how did it happen that we found you among the tree-tops at the head of this island?”

“My name is Silas Hemphill. With a party of others I was on my way down the river in a dugout canoe, intending to join our fortunes with the new settlers from Virginia, who lately came overland. We left Fort Pitt two days back, and were progressing fairly when this storm broke upon us. Doubtless we took too many chances, for we presently found ourselves in the grasp of the river, and could not return to shore.”

He paused a minute to get a grip on himself, and then continued:

“Finally our boat was overturned. Heaven alone knows what became of my two companions; but I fear they must have been drowned.

Only by the rarest of good fortune, and the favor of Providence, was I able to keep afloat until cast up amid the tree-tops where you found me.”

“ But why did you shout? Surely you could not imagine that any one would be on this island to hear you? ” asked Sandy, curious still.

“ I did not know then it was an island. And it seemed to me that I had heard a voice calling, which I supposed must belong to one of my friends who had luckily gained a footing on the shore. That was why I cried out, for I was frantic. But I fear much that I am the only survivor of the three voyagers.”

The newcomer was eying them in turn curiously.

“ And now,” he said, “ I would like to know your names; for I shall never forget what I owe you both. I can see that you must be brothers, for there is some resemblance between you; though I should say that this one,” indicating Sandy, “ probably takes after his mother; while the other is more like his father. This without knowing who your parents may be.”

“ My name is Alexander, though they always

call me Sandy. We are the sons of David and Mary Armstrong.”

As Sandy spoke Silas Hemphill's eyes took on a new glow, and again he thrust out both hands to seize those of the boys.

“How wonderful are the ways of Providence!” he muttered, in a way that gave the listening boys a start. “To think that my life should have been saved by the sons of David Armstrong, of all men!”

“Then you know our father?” demanded Bob.

“No, I have never met him,” came the reply. “But I have heard much about him in the country I happened to pass through while on my way here from Carolina, where my former home lay.”

The rescued man looked at them both, and Bob was thrilled to see tears in his eyes. Why should this stranger be so moved at sight of David Armstrong's two boys? He spoke of having heard about their father — could that have been down in Virginia, in the town which had been so cruel to the man who valued his honor as he did his very life?

Bob saw a faint gleam of light. He hardly dared believe it at first, in fear lest it prove

only a hollow mockery. Still, he could not resist saying:

“ You say you heard much about our father, sir, — was it to his credit that these things were said; or did they tell you the hateful, lying stories that drove him to come far away from those who were once his neighbors and friends? ”

“ My boy, I heard that which your father would give much to know. While I stopped for a few days in the town where you dwelt, there was a serious fray, in a place where strong drink was sold. One man, a black, was badly wounded. His name was Scipio, Black Scipio he was called, and he used to work in the same tobacco warehouse where David Armstrong was employed. Before he died the man confessed that it was *his* hand that fired the barn, for the destruction of which your father was blamed. And now Jason Diggett, conscience stricken for having driven an honest man into exile, wishes to hear from your father in order that he make amends, in so far as pounds, shillings and pence may heal the wound! ”

CHAPTER XXX

CONCLUSION

FOR a full minute the two lads just sat there and stared at each other. Neither could say a single word; indeed, they did not seem to even breathe, such was the excess of sheer happiness that passed over them like a great wave.

Their father's innocence then was proved! His old-time neighbors knew now how grievously they had wronged the one whose name had never before been smirched with a suspicion of evil doing!

Suddenly Sandy awoke. He sprang up and began to dance wildly about, while he flung his arms above his head and shouted at the top of his strong, boyish voice.

“It's come at last, Bob! Just think of it! Father is able to look any man in the face now! Hurrah! it was worth all it cost to learn this! Yes, and I'd go through it again if I had to. Thank you, Mr. Hemphill, thank you! You

will find a happy family when you go home with us, and a warm welcome there!"

The stranded man looked out over that tumbling sea, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Do we have to take the chances of crossing that swollen stream?" he asked.

"Yes," said Bob; "but we have mended our boat, and will have three strong new paddles to work with. We could stay here until to-morrow, but I fear the river may be even worse then than now. But you have made us both happy. We feel that nothing ought to keep us from reaching home this day, to carry the blessed news to our dear ones!"

Bob started back at his work with feverish eagerness; but now joy filled his soul, and caused him to chop with new zeal.

The third paddle was hewn out even while Sandy was smoothing off the second with his jackknife, he being a master-hand at such work, as many boys were in the days when few amusements were given them.

It was now about the middle of the afternoon. The sky was still gloomy overhead, and Bob had fears that the rain would set in again.

"Another reason why we ought to try to

cross before darkness comes," he said, when they spoke about this.

"I only hope it does not start when we are out on that flood," answered Sandy, with a shiver.

"That would be a misfortune," declared Silas Hemphill. "Surely we will not be deserted in the eleventh hour. I hope to shake David Armstrong's hand to-night."

Sandy hurried the finishing of the third paddle. He did not relish the voyage they had before them; but there seemed no other course open.

Before starting out they made all things as secure as possible. Hemphill had by this time fully recovered and professed himself not only willing, but able, to do his share of the paddling. The canoe would carry three, though one might find it necessary at times to stop paddling in order to bale out what water dashed over the sides.

Bob had taken as good a view as possible of their expected course. As he could not see a great distance down the river he might only surmise what awaited them there.

Of course the one prime necessity was to make as quickly as they could toward shore,

taking advantage of every eddy to gain a few inches or feet at a time.

“ I believe I have learned something from our past experience,” he remarked, as he took his place in the stern, ready to push off.

Sandy occupied the bow, while Silas Hemp-hill was a fixture in the centre, where he could assist with his blade, or dip water over the side, as occasion arose.

“ Ready? ” asked Bob, trying to appear quite at his ease, though doubtless his heart was thumping at a tremendous rate at the prospect of their once more daring the dangers of the flood.

“ Yes, push off, Bob! ” said Sandy, wonderfully grave, for him.

Truth to tell there was no doubt but that every one of them just then was occupied with secretly praying that success might attend their object, and the friendly shore be attained in safety.

“ Here goes, then! ”

With the words Bob gave a shove, and the canoe once more danced upon the swollen waters of the furious Ohio.

Immediately every paddle was set to work. The boat made a good start, and shot away

from the lower end of the island like a thing of life, heading for the southern bank of the river.

Then came that strong current, and seized hold. The paddles rose and fell, fast and faster. Muscles were brought to bear that dipped the blades deeply below the surface, and, despite the sweep of the tide, they kept continually edging nearer and nearer the goal for which they were aiming.

There was a deep satisfaction in this. It spurred them all on to doing better things. When a wave slopped over the side Silas Hemp-hill needed no reminder to tell him his duty, but, picking up the little cooking kettle, he started to relieve the canoe of its burden of water.

No one said a word. There was scant breath for the work that occupied their attention, not to mention talking. Actions must take the place of conversation at such a time.

All the while Bob knew that they were gaining. The shore for a brief space of time stood out more positively than before. True, it was beginning to rain, and coming down harder and harder with each passing moment; but even this could not wholly cast a damper over his satisfaction.

“ Keep going! All is well! ”

He managed to shout these few words, feeling that Sandy might be in need of encouragement.

Just where they might be no one could even give a guess now. It was a fight in the dark, apparently; but it could not last much longer.

Already had Bob noticed with joy that the “ pull ” of the current was slackening considerably. There could be but one reason for that — the shore was close by, and here the swollen river moved with far less impetuosity than out in the middle.

At times it had been difficult to wholly avoid a collision with some of the floating trees; but these never varied in their steady downward progress, and the canoe was capable of veering out of the way, so that thus far they had succeeded in keeping trouble at bay.

“ Only a little more, Sandy! ” called Bob.

Silas Hemphill again had his paddle working, and all together they sent the boat flying to the shore. But not one of them was able to raise a cheer when finally they ran aground.

They lay there in the canoe for a short time, limp and exhausted, satisfied to know that they were at last safely landed.

It was Sandy's quick eyes that suddenly made a discovery.

“ Look! where we have come to land, Bob! ” he exclaimed, pointing to some bulky object that seemed to be fastened to the shore with ropes.

“ Why! ” cried Bob, also taken aback, “ as sure as anything that must be Captain Heally's new flatboat, on which he expects some day to drift further down the Ohio! What luck, Mr. Hemphill! Just to think that we have landed in front of *home!* ”

They made haste to scramble ashore, after which the canoe was carried up out of reach of the hungry tide. By this time several men, who had been watching to see that the ropes holding the flatboat did not give way, had heard them, and came hastening to the spot.

Shouldering the buffalo meat which had been safely carried through all their adventures, and with their guns and new paddles, the boys started up the hill, eager to reassure those dear ones, who must certainly be worrying concerning their safety.

Kate was the first to sight them. The girl had been to the lookout when the rain held up, hoping to get some glimpse of the boat, though

no one believed it could cross the river in all that angry storm. She had returned to the cabin when once more the rain came down, but was sitting at a door looking forth when, through the mists, she caught sight of them.

Presently the boys and their guest were inside the cabin, where a warm welcome awaited them. Sandy of course could not keep back the good news.

“ Father! ” he cried, drawing the stranger forward, “ this is Mr. Silas Hemphill, and he brings you great joy. Coming from our old home, he tells us the barn-burner has been found, and confessed his crime! And who do you think it was, but that good-for-nothing slave, Black Scipio, owned by Jason Diggett himself, and who wanted to even the score after receiving twenty lashes at the hands of his master! ”

David Armstrong’s strong face paled. Words failed him in that supreme moment of happiness. He could only turn his mute eyes toward his wife, who in turn bent her head; and the boys knew she was giving thanks to the great God on high, because her faith had not been in vain.

It was a happy household that gathered

under the Armstrong roof that night. Wild though the winds howled across the waste of waters, furious as the flood swept past, inside their walls all was serene.

Again and again did the newcomer have to tell his story. It seemed as though none of them could ever hear it often enough. And, tired though both boys must have been after their hard experiences of that day, neither would think of going to bed until a late hour.

On the morrow a happy event took place, for both companions of Silas Hemphill made their appearance. They had fortunately kept together, and, being carried near a tree, managed to scramble into the branches. Some miles down the stream the tree was stranded near the shore, after getting in an eddy; and by great good luck they landed, to make their way to the settlement.

David Armstrong thought little of returning to his old Virginia home, even though his name had been cleared. This new country looked far too good to him to give it up, and, besides, there were too many bitter memories connected with the Virginia town.

In good time the repentant Jason Diggett did send out quite a bountiful supply of such

things as he fancied the new settlers might need. David at first was inclined to refuse, but finally accepted the gift as in some sort an acknowledgment of reparation for the wrong done him. What the little family did not need he could readily barter with the Indians in his new trade relations, receiving in return valuable skins that he could exchange for money or for tea, sugar and such necessities.

Occasionally Bob and Sandy saw their red friend, Blue Jacket; but he was chary about coming to the settlement, not having any great liking for the whites except the Armstrong family.

The two young pioneers considered that they had well nigh exhausted the stock of adventures that were to fall to their portion when they rescued Silas Hemphill from the flood, and carried him across the raging river to bring good news to the Armstrong cabin.

Little did they suspect that still more strenuous events were going to befall them later on that same season, when their little sister Kate was carried off a prisoner by the roving Iroquois. But these adventures must be kept for the next story of this series of frontier adventure, to be called: "The Pioneer Boys on the

Great Lakes; or, On the Trail of the Iroquois.”

The new settlement waxed strong in numbers, as more people came out from the far country beyond the range of mountains, and joined their forces with those who were first on the ground. A blockhouse was soon finished, in which the settlers could find refuge in case of an Indian attack. Fields were planted as fast as the forest was cleared; and before Fall arrived it was one of the most thriving places west of Fort Pitt.

Daniel Boone came again, and with him that fine fellow, Simon Kenton; just then starting out on his adventurous career, and destined to become so famous in the annals of border warfare. In him the brave and warlike red men found a fearless enemy, equal to Boone himself, and one ready to dare any peril in defence of the hardy settlers.

As the summer waxed and waned Bob and Sandy Armstrong went about their business of providing the family with fresh meat, for game laws were unknown in those early days, and working men must have food to sustain their strength.

While there were occasional times when the

Shawanees swooped down upon the border settlements, they somehow seemed to leave this peaceful home community alone. And David Armstrong and his friends understood that this immunity was the result of the time when Bob and Sandy took the wounded brave in charge, and saved his life. Blue Jacket guarded their interests; and the whole community profited from the charge.



THE END.

NOTES

NOTE 1 (PAGE 1)

AMONG the people of the frontier it was customary, when fortune was kind, so that they happened to possess an overabundance of fresh venison, to dry a stock of this meat for the lean time when food would be scarce. This was known as dried or "jerked" venison, and could be nibbled at when on a tramp, or else served in the form of a stew, being fairly palatable. Of course they picked up this habit of laying in a store against a time of necessity from the Indians, who had possibly done this same thing through the centuries of the past, long before the new America became known to the people of the Old World.

NOTE 2 (PAGE 10)

The deer which had fallen to the guns of Bob and Sandy was of the common red Virginia species. This animal has always been found east of the Mississippi, and ranging from the Great Lakes down to the tip end of the Florida peninsula. The farther south one goes, the smaller the deer becomes; so that it is not uncommon for a successful hunter among the palmetto-bordered shores of the Mexican Gulf to carry his quarry home on his back, with little effort.

NOTE 3 (PAGE 32)

The usual costume of the day consisted of a heavy jacket and trousers, and under the jacket a sort of jerkin or close waistcoat made of wool. Underneath this was another garment that might perhaps be called a shirt, woven in the crude, home-made hand loom, and adding much to the comfort of the wearer.

Except for the woollen jerkin, all the clothing was made of a stout cloth that in later days came to be known as jeans. It was wear-resisting to a remarkable degree, which of course proved to be a blessing all around, for new clothes in the families of most pioneers must always be an event never to be forgotten in the lives of the children.

Moccasins usually covered the feet, shoes being expensive luxuries which few among the settlers could afford. To tan a deerskin, and fashion a pair of moccasins, was an accomplishment quickly learned from the Indians.

NOTE 4 (PAGE 55)

Perhaps to the boy of to-day the Armstrong home would have appeared a very cheerless place. The sleeping-places in the loft were reached by means of a pair of steep stairs that when not in use could be drawn up to the board ceiling, thus affording more room below. Over in one corner stood the spinning-wheel which was responsible for so many of Bob and Sandy's comforts in the way of clothes. In another quarter was the loom at which the good woman of the house was wont to fashion the stout cloth from which the outer gar-

ments of both boys, as well as Mr. Armstrong himself, were made.

Under the small window stood the locker in which the housewife kept what small remnant of former luxuries in the way of linen remained to her from the stores in the comfortable home in Richmond that had been theirs before trouble found them out.

The light from the open windows fell upon the bunches of herbs and dried vegetables that hung from the low rafters overhead, and upon the steaming pot that hung over the blaze in the wide-throated fireplace.

NOTE 5 (PAGE 112)

Daniel Boone at this time was still a comparatively young man; but already his intrepid soul had drunk deeply of the cup of adventure; and he felt within him the yearning of a true explorer.

He had, some years before, given up his comfortable home in the Yadkin valley, away back in North Carolina, because the country there was becoming "too thickly settled" to please his ideas of comfort. When it became necessary to mark the boundaries of his fields, and he could actually see the smoke of another cabin not over half a mile away, he resolved to put into action the designs for a westward move which in secret he had long been cherishing.

His faithful wife gave herself heart and soul to his ambition to settle in that mysterious Golden West that seemed to be beckoning Boone on. They made a first step by crossing the Cumberland Mountains, and starting a new home to the west of this range.

But Boone had already been further in Kentucky,

and there was that in the rich plains of the interior to draw him like a magnet. When one has seen the region long known as the "Blue Grass country," around Lexington, and realized what a paradise on earth it has ever been, it is not so hard to understand why Daniel Boone refused to content himself with a home in a safer locality, less favored by Nature.

In history Boone will always stand at the head of the brave pioneers who opened up the grand country south of the Ohio. All his later life he was engaged in trying to defend the infant settlements against the assaults of the red men. These Indians learned to respect him as a man more than any other "paleface" known to the times.

Kentucky was known for many years as the "debatable ground," simply because of the tremendous efforts of the Shawanees, allied with other Indian tribes, to burn the new settlements, and drive out the pioneers. But by slow degrees they found themselves obliged to sue for peace, and cede their glorious lands to their conquerors in exchange for certain valuable commodities.

To show what this remarkable man endured for the sake of the principle which he had made a part of his life, his own words, when speaking of Kentucky, may be given as evidence of his sincerity of purpose:

"My footsteps have often been marked by blood, and therefore I can truly subscribe to its title of the 'dark and bloody ground.' Two darling sons and a brother have I lost by savage hands. Many dark and sleepless nights have I been a companion for owls, separated from the cheerful society of men, scorched by the summer's sun, and pinched by the winter's

cold — an instrument ordained to settle the wilderness. But now the scene is changed; peace crowns the sylvan shade! ”

NOTE 6 (PAGE 113)

Simon Kenton was very young at this time; but already in Boone he seems to have found the type of man whom he aspired to imitate. Brave to a stage of rashness, he lacked many of the most admirable qualities that stamped that peerless pioneer, but he had a personality that inspired the respect and admiration of all.

Kenton's association with Boone in those early days had a great influence on his future life. His one failing was rashness; and, when dealing with a sly and treacherous foe, such as the red men invariably proved themselves to be, this was indeed a weakness that if not corrected would sooner or later have brought about the death of the venturesome frontiersman.

Boone frequently took his younger companion to task for hasty words, or reckless conduct; and it was due to his wise counsel and example that Kenton became later a leader among the pioneers second only in influence and ability to Boone himself.

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